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Style and Interpretation in the Seven Keyboard Toccatas of J. S. Bach, BWV 910-916

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Style and Interpretation in the Seven Keyboard Toccatas of J. S. Bach, BWV 910-916

by

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Treatise

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Dedication

To my parents, Alan and Linda Mace, for their encouragement, patience, and support that has made this treatise possible.

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by

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The keyboard toccatas of J. S. Bach, BWV 910-916, present a formidable challenge of interpretation to the modern-day performer. These works contain some of the most unusual compositional techniques to be found in Bach's output due to their use of an improvisatory, virtuosic style inherited from the seventeenth century. While pianists of today are trained to perform with perfect fidelity to the score, the treatises from the time of Bach point to a rhythmically free approach to the improvisatory features of these toccatas. The goal of this treatise is to explore how the historical tradition from which Bach's toccatas emerged influenced their stylistic characteristics with the purpose of applying this information to create an informed performance by today's interpreters. In this effort, this treatise focuses on several broad categories in the process of understanding the inspiration and, therefore, the interpretation of these works. These categories include the genesis of the toccata as a genre, the compositional techniques

associated with the toccata, Bach's personal contribution to the genre, and the interpretation of Bach's toccatas specifically.

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Introduction

Johann Sebastian Bach composed a total of twelve pieces that use the title, *toccata*. These works include four organ ("pedaliter") toccatas (BWV 538, 540, 564, and 565), seven keyboard ("manualiter") toccatas (BWV 910-916), and a toccata as the opening movement of the Partita no. 6 in E minor, BWV 830. In order to present a thorough study, the scope of this research focuses only on the seven "manualiter" toccatas composed within Bach's early career, BWV 910-916.

These seven toccatas are somewhat neglected in the literature and, until recently, in the repertoire of performing and recording artists. When compared to the *Well-Tempered Clavier* or the *Goldberg Variations* these works simply have not received the level of attention that they deserve from researchers or performers. This treatise strives in part to fill this void by focusing on two separate but inherently connected aspects of these magnificent works: inspiration and interpretation. Inspired by the dramatic, improvisatory writing of toccatas as they were composed in the seventeenth century, Bach continues—while also elaborating upon—the tradition from his predecessors. The basic premise of this treatise is the following: when the performer understands the seventeenth-century style that was a springboard for Bach's approach in these works, many issues of interpretation become clearer.

In the effort to help the performer's interpretation of these works, three main topics will be explored. The first is a reconstruction of background and historical context. Chapters one and two fulfill this goal by presenting important issues such as definitions,

basic compositional features, the genesis of the toccata, and how this genre reached J. S. Bach. In this discussion each feature of the toccata as it developed is linked to Bach's own use of the genre.

The second main topic is a discussion of a complex term: the *stylus phantasticus.* When studying how the toccata developed one comes across this term numerous times. It is used in reference to toccatas stretching from late sixteenth century Italy to the time of Bach in eighteenth-century northern Germany. It is then important to understand what this term means and how it is a part of Bach's keyboard toccatas. Chapter three explores some of the intriguing definitions of the *stylus phantasticus* by scholars of the time and examines *stylus phantasticus* works by composers who substantially influenced Bach during the time he was writing the seven toccatas.

While the first through the third chapters give the performer a thorough understanding of Bach's influences and compositional style in the toccatas, chapters four and five examine the third aspect of this study of Bach's toccatas, the one related to their interpretation. Since historically informed performance is the goal of this treatise, the most significant writings of scholars, performers, and theorists from the time of Bach are explored. These chapters also include a discussion of some of the main studies of modern scholars who specialize in historical performance. The conclusion of this study on interpretation looks at twenty-first century trends in performance, including a review of recordings on harpsichord and piano made within the last decade.

Throughout this treatise I have consulted a number of primary sources, including theoretical writings such as Athanasius Kircher's *Musurgia Universalis* (1650) and

Johann Mattheson's *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739). Also, the treatises of Carl Philip Emanuel Bach, *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu Spielen* (1753), and Johan Joachim Quantz, *On Playing the Flute* (1752), have been considered along with Girolamo Frescobaldi's preface to the first book of toccatas, *Toccate d'intavolatura di cimbalo et organo* (1615). The scores that I have used for discussions of Bach's seven keyboard toccatas include the Bärenreiter Urtext (Kassel 1999) and the Henle Verlag (München 1962) editions.

While this treatise cannot possibly cover every possible interpretive aspect of Bach's toccatas, it is hoped that the performer will gain a greater understanding upon which to base a historically informed interpretation of these works.

Chapter 1. Defining the Toccata as a Genre

Johann Sebastian Bach's (1685-1750) seven keyboard toccatas are some of the most daring and complex works within the Baroque master's output and indeed within the keyboard repertoire as a whole. Their multi-sectional architectural design encompasses musical material as diverse as complex fugues, instrumental recitatives, and virtuosic flourishes. Within this structure they borrow from a tradition of composition that was popular during the seventeenth century: the *stylus phantasticus*. Why do Bach's toccatas contain these unique features of structure and style? This question can only be answered by a study of the toccata and how it developed over time.

In this chapter I will examine the historical debt of Bach's toccatas by discussing terminology, instrumental implications, purpose, and compositional features that define the toccata as a genre even from the earliest phase of its development. I will also discuss the genres that share many features with the toccata and some methods of determining the differences between these genres. With a deeper understanding of the debt that Bach's toccatas owe to a previous generation the performer of these works will have a distinct advantage when making choices of interpretation.

Defining the term "Toccata"

The word "toccata" derives from the Italian verb "toccare" which literally translates as "to touch." Michael Praetorius, writing at the beginning of the seventeenth century, provides an intriguing discussion of the root and true meaning of this word in his *Syntagma Musicum* (1619):

> In my opinion they are called toccata by the Italians because *toccare* means *tangere*, *attingere* [to touch] and *toccata*, *tactus* [touch]. The Italians themselves say *toccate un poco* meaning "touch the instrument" or "play the keyboard a little." Thus the word toccata can very well be referred to as a touching or fingering of the keyboard.[1]

The focus on "touching or fingering" the instrument in Praetorius' etymological discussion of the toccata shows the mindset of musicians in an age where solo instrumental keyboard music was beginning to develop its own repertoire. Beyond this fact, by the beginning of the 16th century, music for the keyboard started to become more idiomatic rather than simply imitating vocal music.[2] The choice of the term toccata then sets these works apart from the vocal repertoire that formed the bulk of musical activities in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Recent definitions of the toccata focus on the instrumentation as well as the musical style in which they are written. The Harvard Dictionary of Music defines the toccata as "A virtuoso composition for keyboard or plucked string instrument featuring sections of brilliant passage work, with or without imitative or fugal interludes."[3] The New Grove entry on this genre says similarly that a toccata is "A piece intended primarily as a display of manual dexterity, often free in form and almost always for a solo keyboard instrument."[4] The common factors between these two definitions are the focus

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[1] Michael Praetorius, *Syntagma Musicum III*, trans. and ed. Jeffrey Kite-Powell (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 40.
[2] John Butt, "Germany and the Netherlands" in Alexander Silbiger, *Keyboard Music Before 1700* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 152.
[3] *Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 4th ed., s.v. "Toccata."
[4] *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Toccata"

on a solo keyboard instrument and the inclusion of virtuosic writing, which indeed characterize the toccatas of J. S. Bach as well as of his many predecessors.

It should be mentioned that there were disparate uses of the word "toccata" throughout its early development, including works that do not resemble the toccata as we know it today. In the Renaissance, for instance, "toccata" was used for brass fanfares. This usage can be traced to the seventeenth century in the opening instrumental movement of Monteverdi's *Orfeo* (1607), entitled simply "toccata." While this brilliant brass fanfare does include some features that are similar to the opening sections of keyboard toccatas (a pedal point with virtuoso figuration above), it is not best viewed as a precedent to the later solo genre due to dissimilarities in instrumentation and form. Instead, this usage of the title is arguably the precedent for symphonies in the eighteenth century.[5]

The word toccata or "tastar de corde" (a precedent to the word toccata meaning to "play on the strings") is also found as a title for lute pieces in the early sixteenth century. "Tastar de corde" was the title used by lutenist, Joanambrosio Dalza (active around the beginning of the sixteenth century) for five lute pieces published in 1508.[6] The simpler term "toccata" (in this period alternatively spelled "tochata") was also used as a title for lute pieces in the sixteenth century. Francesco da Milano (1497-1543) used this term for a toccata published in 1536.[7] Some similarities between these lute toccatas and early Italian keyboard toccatas include opening measures that feature arpeggiated figuration, a slow

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[5] Murray C. Bradshaw, *The Origin of the Toccata* (American Institute of Musicology, 1972), 13.
[6] Bradshaw, *Origin*, 13.
[7] *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Toccata"

harmonic motion throughout, and some very brief imitation. However, they do not serve as a precedent for the solo keyboard toccata due to their extreme brevity (lasting just over half a minute), lack of thematic variety, and non-sectional structure. It is more likely that the similarities are due to a close geographic location and time period with the early keyboard toccata.

To complicate matters more, the keyboard toccata, when used in titles with additional descriptors, also had a few varied uses. Two of the terms that appear in the musical literature of the early Baroque are, *toccata di durezze e ligature*, and *toccata in modo di trombetto*. The *toccata di durezze e ligature* was a slow-moving organ toccata that was played during solemn moments within the Roman Catholic liturgy, such as the Elevation of the Host. Since Bach's keyboard toccatas are certainly not solemn or slow throughout we can see that this type of toccata would not be a part of his inspiration. The *toccata in modo di trombetto* was a keyboard transcription of a trumpet fanfare and as such held a completely separate style from the keyboard toccatas that led to Bach as well.[8] It will be clear as this treatise explores the characteristics of Bach's toccatas, that these varied uses of the term do not have a great deal in common with the toccatas central to a discussion of J. S. Bach's output in this genre. This examination has instead served to differentiate these varied uses from the one that is the focus of this discussion: the keyboard toccata.

The use of "toccata" without any qualifiers and in connection with a keyboard work is the one that we usually associate with this word since its popularity far exceeded

[8] Bradshaw, *Origin*, 13.

that of the ensemble and lute toccata genres.[9] As we will see in the following chapter, the keyboard toccata originated in Venice at the end of the sixteenth century. The earliest published keyboard toccatas exhibit a sectional form, virtuosic writing, and fugal or imitative sections. Although J. S. Bach's toccatas are far more lengthy works, they also contain these main features. The definition given by The New Grove Dictionary says the following: "Bach's harpsichord toccatas are large-scale works of individual design, incorporating at least one and sometimes two fugal movements. Rhapsodic figuration is subordinated to passages in regular rhythm."[10] Although time and distance separate Bach and the earliest composers of the keyboard toccata in Venice, the sectionalized form that contrasts imitative against improvisatory material remains.

In summary, the Baroque keyboard toccata may be described in this manner: a keyboard toccata is a solo work that is organized in sections of contrasting material. These sections may be short or long, yet they present a single compositional concept—whether it be brilliant figuration or fugal/imitative material. They show the skill of the performer and the composer in that they are technically challenging and use sophisticated compositional techniques such as the fugue. Beyond these features, there are issues of instrumentation, purpose, and style that we now turn to in an effort to better understand this dramatic genre.

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[9] Bradshaw, *Origin*, 14.
[10] *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Toccata"

Instrumental Implications

Several of the definitions just explored mentioned that the toccata is a solo work for keyboard. The question of exactly which keyboard (organ, harpsichord, or clavichord) would be appropriate for the performance of a toccata is one that requires an examination on a case-by-case basis. Throughout the time that the majority of keyboard toccatas were composed—the late sixteenth through the early eighteenth centuries—at least three keyboard instruments were commonly in use including the organ, harpsichord, and clavichord. Besides the ubiquitous use of the organ in the earliest history of Italy, harpsichords and clavichords were commonly in use throughout Italy (where the toccata first developed) by 1550, indicating the possibility of performing these early toccatas on various keyboard instruments.[11] Occasionally the composer or publisher specified exactly which of these keyboards should be used on the title pages. More often, however, the instrumental designation is quite vague. Titles such as "Clavier," "Clavicymbal," or "Flügel" do not give definitive answers about instrumentation since they only indicate some kind of keyboard instrument.[12]

One instance where the score contains instructions for instrumentation is in the toccatas of Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583-1643). His two volumes of toccatas list the organ and the harpsichord on their title pages.[13] The reference to both these instruments at the

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[11] Robert Judd, "Italy," in *Keyboard Music before 1700*, 2nd ed., Ed. Alexander Silbiger (New York: Routledge, 2004), 240.
[12] David Rowland, *Early Keyboard Instruments: A Practical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 43-44.
[13]The title pages state the following: *Toccate D'Intavolatura di Cimbalo et Organo, Partite di Diverse Arie e Corrente, Balletti, Ciaccone, Passachagli, di Girolamo Frescobaldi, Organista in S'Pietro di Roma (1612),* and *Il Secondo Libro di Toccate, Canzone Versi, Hinni Magnificat Gagliarde, Correnti et Altre*

beginning of these sets of toccatas is most likely referring to the specific instrumental instructions that Frescobaldi placed in the headings of individual toccatas rather than leaving the choice of instrument for every work up to the performer. An example of this indication is in the third toccata (Toccata Terza) of the second volume where Frescobaldi adds the following instructions: *Per l'organo da sonarsi alla levatione*. It is interesting to note that this toccata would have been used during the Elevation of the Host—a specific use of the term "toccata" (dissimilar with the keyboard toccata that is the focus of this discussion) that was mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Even if the instrumentation is not clearly designated in the score there are a few clues that may aid in determining a toccata's true instrumentation. One of the most important clues is the purpose for which a toccata was composed. The function of the earliest Venetian toccatas was to set the pitch for vocalists during the Roman Catholic liturgy. Due to this purpose they were performed in a cathedral setting where the organ would be the preferred keyboard instrument.

An important point to mention at this point is that it would be inaccurate to determine the instrumentation of a particular toccata based upon whether it contains a pedal part or not. An example of this is in the early Venetian toccatas; even though they do not contain a written pedal part they were conceived for organ due to their purpose in the liturgy. The reason for a lack of pedal part in the score is most likely due to the limitations of the organs in this location. The organs in the St. Mark's basilica in Venice

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Partite, D'intavolatura di Cimbalo et Organo, Di Girolamo Frescobaldi, Organista in S'Pietro di Roma (1637).

had only a single manual and only a few pull-down pedals (in the rest of Italy this is true without exception as well).[14] Thus, it was not necessary to include a third system containing a pedal part in these early toccatas. In the case of the early Venetian toccatas the instrumental designation is then determined by performance function rather than by details in the musical score.

Another way instrumental designation may be determined is by the idiomatic style that a particular toccata exhibits. The greatest idiomatic difference between toccatas conceived for the organ rather than for the harpsichord throughout the late sixteenth to early eighteenth centuries is the lengthy note values and held out pedal points that organ toccatas exhibit; toccatas for the harpsichord generally do not contain note values beyond a measure in length. Organ toccatas usually have a far slower rate of harmonic change as well. Despite these differences, there is no historical evidence barring the performance of harpsichord toccatas on the manuals of the organ or arranging an organ toccata for the harpsichord.

The seven toccatas BWV 910-916 of J. S. Bach evade attempts to determine their "true" instrumental designation. Neither Bach nor his posthumous publishers provided any definitive indication of instrumentation in the title page or headings of individual toccatas. As a result there are different stances on the "true" instrumentation for these works. These toccatas fall under the category of "manualiter" as opposed to "pedaliter" compositions because of their lack of a pedal part. This would seem to indicate that they were not intended for the organ, which in northern Germany had pedals. However, as

[14] Robert Judd, "Italy," 240.

explained earlier, the lack of a pedal part does not completely rule out the organ. Indeed Robert Marshall argues that they were conceived for the organ by comparing the range used in these works with evidence of the types of organs Bach had access to during this period.[15] David Schulenberg, on the other hand, is not convinced that these works are for the organ, citing discrepancies in idiomatic features. He argues that, although they include some organ-like stylistic attributes, the bass pedal points in the toccatas are usually not sustained as long and the textural spacing is not wide enough to indicate the organ as the preferred instrument. Schulenberg concludes: "In short, the toccatas are probably best viewed as harpsichord pieces, but ones that imitate organ style."[16]

Since there are no indications of instrumentation in the score of Bach's toccatas and the idiomatic features do not give a definitive answer about instrumentation, the last piece of evidence that may determine whether these works were for organ, harpsichord or clavichord is their purpose. Considering their purpose as teaching pieces (which will be further discussed later) it is most likely that the seven toccatas of J. S. Bach were intended for harpsichord or clavichord, the instruments that were more readily accessible for such purposes. Backing up this assumption are the remarks of Peter Wollny, writing in the preface to the Bärenreiter edition of the seven toccatas. He says that these works "have survived (at least in the early sources) in connection with repertoires of harpsichord music." Despite this point, performing these works on the manuals of an

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[15] Robert Marshall, "Organ or 'Klavier'? Instrumental Prescriptions in the Sources of Bach's Keyboard Works," in *J. S. Bach as Organist: His Instruments, Music, and Performance Practices*, ed. George Stauffer and Ernest May (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 225-229.
[16] David Schulenberg, *The Keyboard Music of J. S. Bach,* 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 99.

organ would certainly be a possibility since there is no evidence to prohibit such a practice.[17]

Evidence on title pages of the purpose for a particular toccata and idiomatic features aside, there is no rule against performing any toccata, whether it was composed by Frescobaldi, Merulo, or Bach, on a different keyboard instrument from that which is prescribed or assumed. Since there was a far greater degree of variety among keyboard instruments at that time, performers and composers during the Baroque period did not relegate themselves to a single type of instrument. It is more likely that works were performed on whichever keyboard instrument was available at the time and place of performance.[18] The brilliant organ recording of Bach's "manualiter" keyboard toccata in D minor, BWV 913, which Gustav Leonhardt released in 2002, is an example of how successful Bach's keyboard toccatas can indeed be on the "king of instruments."[19]

Purpose

The availability of instruments often depended on the occasion for which a performance would take place. When examining the purpose that toccatas served throughout history two main trends appear: a preludial function within the liturgy and a pedagogical function. In Venice, church organists used the toccata to set the key or mode of a particular section of the liturgy that would follow. Hence, "toccatas were

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[17] Peter Wollny, preface to *Toccatas BWV 910-916,* ed. Peter Wollny, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1999), VI.
[18] Rowland, *Keyboard Instruments*, 11.
[19] Johann Sebastian Bach, *Organ Works*, perf. Gustav Leonhardt, Deutsche Harmonia Mundi CD, 2002.

introductory compositions whose function was chiefly to supply a choir with its pitch."[20] Tilton gives a similar definition of the purpose of this genre, but specifically states that this was their liturgical purpose: "the liturgical function of the organ toccata was to establish the mode of the antiphon or motet to follow."[21] In both Tilton's and Bradshaw's definitions it is clear that the toccata acted as a prelude to a vocal work in the liturgy.

In seventeenth-century Germany, the toccata was also described as a preludial piece. In his *Syntagma Musicum* (1619) Michael Praetorius writes the following: "A toccata is a preamble or prelude played by an organist when he first sits down at the organ or harpsichord [*Clavicymbalum*], before he begins the motet or fugue [*Fugen*]."[22] In this preludial purpose, the toccata was also serving a liturgical function in the Latin Lutheran services of Praetorius' time.

One perplexing issue that this definition by Praetorius presents is that it seems only to describe what would later be the first section of a Bach toccata. His reference to imitative material (motet or fugue) *following* what he terms a "toccata" would seem to indicate that Praetorius did not think of imitative material as belonging to the toccata proper. Because of this implication, his view is quite different from that of the Italians who used the term toccata to describe a sectional work inclusive of imitative counterpoint and improvisational figuration. As with any genre, the modification of the meaning of a term is a part of changing styles and tastes. Praetorius, living sixty years before Bach and

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[20] Murray C. Bradshaw, "Tonal Design in the Venetian Intonation and Toccata," *Music Review* 35 (1984): 102.
[21] Mary C. Tilton, "The Influence of Psalm Tone and Mode on the Structure of the Phrygian Toccatas of Claudio Merulo" *Theoria: Historical Aspects of Music Theory* 4 (1989): 106.
[22] Praetorius, *Syntagma Musicum*, 40.

composing his toccatas mainly for a liturgical function, most likely had a different view on the compositional features of the toccata. What remains constant, however, is the idea that the toccata acts as a prelude to another work, whether or not it encompasses imitative material alongside the figurational material.

The toccata is also frequently mentioned as a piece that tests the tuning, touch, and expressive possibilities of the instrument while the performer also warms up his fingers for the repertoire that will follow (as already underlined by Praetorius). In this function, it also serves a preludial function since the keyboardist must test the tuning of an instrument before beginning the first piece of a recital. Geck, elaborates on this idea in his biography of J. S. Bach:

> The simplest kind of performing traditionally comes at the start of a recital: the artists introduces himself and the possibilities of his instrument. At the same time, like the rhapsodes of antiquity, he "prepares," testing his finger dexterity with rapid runs and the tuning of his instrument with lightly struck chords. In Italy since the middle of the sixteenth century this improvisational art was known as the toccata, and Frescobaldi was its master.[23]

While the preludial purposes just discussed—including setting the pitch for vocalists in the liturgy, preceding a motet or fugue, or testing the tuning and warming the fingers before a concert—contributed in large part to the stylistic features that Bach's toccatas would encompass, they do not explain the function of Bach's works and those of his contemporaries. The toccatas of Bach's time are stand-alone works, not intended to set pitches for vocalists or precede a motet. Instead, the most convincing argument for their function is a pedagogical one.

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[23] Martin Geck, *Johann Sebastian Bach: Life and Work,* trans. John Hargraves (Orlando, Florida: Harcourt, Inc., 2000), 473.

There are a few pieces of evidence that point toward a pedagogical function in the high Baroque toccatas of Bach's time. Features of their compositional form and style confirm this purpose. Bach's toccatas are lengthy works; if such a lengthy work were to serve a preludial function, it would far overreach this purpose. Also, the extreme variety of material in these works would make them ideal for the more advanced student, giving an opportunity to confront many technical and interpretive challenges. The lack of a pedal part in these toccatas also points to a pedagogical purpose since students who cannot yet reach the pedals need repertoire to refine keyboard technique. While these reasons may be purely speculative, there are a few other pieces of evidence that should be taken into account.

In addition to evidence of compositional style, it is important to note that Bach began to accept pupils at least by the time he was employed at Mühlhausen (1707) and from this time onwards, Bach was never without a studio of pupils. Consequently, Bach's life as a teacher began exactly during the period his keyboard toccatas were composed. It is then plausible to assume that these works served an immediate need for teaching repertoire. J.M. Schubart (1690–1721), J.C. Vogler (1696–1763), a page of Duke Ernst August named Jagemann (dates unknown), and J. G. Zeigler (1688-1747), were a few of his students during the time he composed the toccatas.

Probably the most decisive argument for a pedagogical purpose in the toccatas is the fact that many of Bach's pupils, at least in the Weimar period (1708-1717), made copies of the toccatas in their own hands. In fact, this is the only way in which many of the toccatas were passed down to future generations since no extant copies of the toccatas

exist in Bach's own hand.[24] It is logical to assume that Bach lent the scores of the toccatas to his pupils for copying and also performing purposes.

While it is highly likely that Bach used the toccatas for teaching pieces in the Mühlhausen and Weimar periods there are opposing views on Bach's use of toccatas for this purpose later in his life, particularly in Leipzig. While Geck believes that, "Bach often employed his early toccatas for teaching, even in later years,"[25] a different view is expressed by Peter Wollny, who in the preface to the Bärenreiter edition of the seven toccatas writes that "the toccatas had been dropped from Bach's teaching or performance materials at least by the time of his Leipzig period."[26] These two scholars do agree, however, on the use of the toccatas for teaching pieces at least early in Bach's life.

In short, while Bach's toccatas may not have continued the tradition of a preludial function, his toccatas are indebted to the compositional style that the original preludial purpose created. The improvisational, sectional, and virtuosic style of Bach's toccatas reflects the early toccata's preludial function.

Compositional Style

As briefly mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the compositional style found in these works is a sectional structure that encompasses virtuosic flourishes, imitative material, fugal material, instrumental recitative, and lengthy sequences among other techniques. Examining the overall structure of a typical toccata, we first turn to the

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[24] Wollny, preface to *Toccatas BWV 910-916*, VI.
[25] Geck, *Life and Work*, 489.
[26] Wollny, preface to *Toccatas BWV 910-916,* VI.

remarks of some scholars on this subject. Bradshaw writes that the toccata is a "keyboard composition in which sustained chords and brilliant scale passages alternate with imitative sections."[27] Although reduced to the simplest level, Bradshaw's definition certainly describes the keyboard toccata in a way that is inclusive of the genre as it was used by composers from the late sixteenth century to the time of Bach. Mary C. Tilton gives a similar definition of this genre when discussing the toccatas of Venetian organist Claudio Merulo (1533-1604): "…Merulo developed the toccata into a lengthy, skillfully-crafted composition alternating highly embellished virtuosic sections with imitative, ricercare-like passages in predominantly four-voice texture."[28] Tilton's definition contains a few more details yet still describes the same basic features found in Bradshaw's definition.

A sectional structure is then inherent in even the earliest toccatas. This, once again, relates to their liturgical, preludial function. In the toccatas of Frescobaldi the sectional structure allowed the performer to end the toccata whenever the pacing of the liturgy required it. In Frescobaldi's preface to the first book of toccatas, he writes the following:

> In the Toccatas I have made sure not only that there is an abundance of various kinds of *passi* and *affetti*; but also that each one of these *passi* may be played separately, so that the player, under no obligation to complete an entire toccata, can terminate it wherever he wishes.[29]

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[27] Bradshaw, *Origin*, 14.
[28] Tilton, "The Influence of Psalm Tone," 106.
[29] Girolamo Frescobaldi, Preface to *Toccate d'intavolatura di cimbalo et organo, libro primo e libro, Roma 1637* (Firenze: Studio per edizioni scelte, 1978), translated in Christopher Stembridge, "Interpreting Frescobaldi. The Notation in the Printed Sources of Frescobaldi's Keyboard Music and its Implications for the Performer," *The Organ Yearbook: A Journal for the Players & Historians of Keyboard Instruments* 34 (2005): 53.

Thus, the cadences and pauses between sections of a toccata allowed this shortening to be accomplished in a graceful manner. Although Bach's toccatas were most likely meant to be played in their entirety, the sectional structure remains—although with a greater measure of variety than in the earliest toccatas. Troeger comments on this feature in the following statement:

> As developed by Bach, the toccata includes several opposing styles: fugues; orchestrally styled movements (such as the second main section of the Toccata in G minor) and the *stylus phantasticus* itself, which embraces flourishes and brilliant passagework (such as the openings of the Toccatas in D Major and G Minor), recitative-like writing, extravagant harmonic explorations, dramatic contrasts, freely voiced textures, and sometimes long and pensive sequences.[30]

From Troeger's definition we can see that Bach's toccatas go beyond simple alternations of free and imitative material; Bach expands upon the idea of alternation to include a far wider variety of compositional procedures.

Beyond a sectional structure that alternates virtuosic passagework and imitative material, there are a few other features of the Baroque toccata that should be mentioned. Amidst the sectional structure, toccatas tend to exhibit thematic unity. Even though each section of a toccata contains drastically different and contrasting material, small motivic figures tend to link each section to the next or sometimes figures that appeared in the first section return in the last. This is perhaps the composer's way of ensuring compositional coherence in a work that is quite fragmented by its very nature.

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[30] Richard Troeger, *Playing Bach on the Keyboard: A Practical Guide* (Cambridge, England: Amadeus Press, 2003) 55-56.

Also, fugal sections, when included in toccatas, tend to be less strict compositionally than they are in works that have their main focus on the fugue (such as Bach's preludes and fugues of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*). Rhapsodic interruptions, non-rigorous part-writing, lack of fugal development, and virtuosic fugal endings are frequently found in Bach's toccatas—similar features are found in the imitative sections of Frescobaldi and Froberger's works.

Touched on in Troeger's description earlier is the fact that Bach's toccatas tended to push harmonic boundaries in the service of dramatic expression. This was true even in the earliest examples of this genre. The Italian composer Ercole Pasquini (c. 1540-1620) used such musical techniques as "abrupt harmonic shifts, figuration of originality sometimes approaching the bizarre, and changes of texture and figuration."[31] These are features that Girolamo Frescobaldi, one of the greatest early composers of the genre, would also develop in his toccatas. Frescobaldi's toccatas contain "a variety of figurations set forth in discrete sections…and, not least, a high level of virtuosic technical demands."[32] These features are of course applicable to the toccatas of J. S. Bach who took the toccata to an even greater expressive level almost a century later. In short, these dramatic features of the toccata ultimately describe the compositional style that is a definitive feature of toccatas in the Baroque: the *stylus phantasticus*.

The *stylus phantasticus*, which will be discussed in detail in chapter four, is a style of composition that is inherent in the genre of the toccata. This style was a

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[31] Judd, "Italy," 269.
[32] Ibid., 289.

seventeenth-century invention and was categorized and defined by some of the most prominent scholars on music of the time. It finds its way into toccatas from the earliest examples in Venice, where the use of diminutions displayed the technique of the composer/performer. Since these early beginnings in Venice, the *stylus phantasticus* continued to be a major component in toccatas from Frescobaldi in southern Italy to Johann Jacob Froberger (1616-1667) in southern Germany, and finally to the north-German organ school of the late seventeenth century, including the compositions of Matthias Weckmann (c. 1616-1674) and Johann Adam Reincken (1643-1722). The *stylus phantasticus* is now most commonly associated with Dieterich Buxtehude's organ compositions.

Since Bach was influenced either directly or indirectly by composers who used the *stylus phantasticus*, it is not a surprise that his toccatas feature this style as well. However, this is not a topic that has been thoroughly discussed in the copious literature on Bach's life and works. Chapter three endeavors to fill that void, but in the course of this chapter it will suffice to say that Bach's toccatas did inherit the style of composers who preceded him, including the *stylus phantasticus*.

Similar Genres

As quoted earlier, Michael Praetorius said that the toccata is like a preamble or prelude. This highlights an important question; what differentiates the toccata from other genres that function as introductory works and are commonly mentioned as similar to the toccata? Some genres that are similar in function and style to the toccata are the ricercar,

praeludium, and fantasia. Pieter Dirksen, in his book, *The Keyboard Music of Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck*, writes that a common misconception about keyboard works with such titles as ricercar, praeludium, fantasia, and intonation, is that their titles were interchangeable. Dirksen explains: "There are, however, decisive arguments against the validity of this view, not least in the case of the toccata."[33]

Taking a closer look at these differences, the ricercare, which translates from the original Italian as "to search for," is a genre that is usually imitative. In its earliest stages, the ricercare resembled the toccata in that it was improvisatory and held a preludial function. However, the genre later came to encompass a far more imitative or even fugal work, far from the free, virtuosic writing found in the toccata. Crocker writes in reference to Frescobaldi's output that ricercares "are somber and severe compared with the brilliant, rhapsodic toccatas."[34] Thus they can be most obviously differentiated from toccatas in their imitative focus and lack of dramatic or virtuosic writing.

The *prelude* or *preambulum* early in its usage is essentially the German label for a piece similar to the early Italian toccata. In this sense, the prelude bears the most resemblance with the toccata among the genres mentioned. Indeed, particularly within Buxtehude's output, the toccata and prelude are difficult to distinguish from one another. The prelude's function was the same as the early toccata: to precede a vocal work, to test the tuning of the instrument, and to warm up the fingers of the keyboardist; however, its purpose early in its development was purely liturgical as opposed to the dual secular and

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[33] Pieter Dirksen, *The Keyboard Music of Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck: Its Style, Significance and Influence.* (Utrecht: Koninklijke Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis, 1997) 35.
[34] Richard L. Crocker, *A History of Musical Style* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966), 244.

liturgical use of the toccata. Later, with the preludes of Buxtehude and Bach, this liturgical purpose was not necessarily upheld—for example, Bach's use of this genre in the *Well-Tempered Clavier*. The compositional characteristics it embodied were similar to the toccata—improvisational writing, including arpeggiation, scales, and other figurational material over a relatively simple harmonic foundation.

The *fantasia* embodied a wide variety of musical forms throughout the Baroque era. It was also used interchangeably with the *ricercare* or *preamble*.[35] The fantasia, much as the ricercare, held different meanings according to the geographic location in which it was composed. As the title would suggest, the fantasia allows the composer/performer much freedom in figuration and structure. This also leads to a wide variety of compositional techniques throughout the course of its usage. The single feature that most effectively separates the fantasia from the toccata is its use of a monothematic structure whereas the toccata uses many, diverse thematic subjects.

Looking at these similar genres and the tendency for one to overlap the other, it can become frustrating to find one single definition that remains valid for each genre over the entire time of their use in the literature. This is due to the inherent nature of musical genres, where differences of use from one composer to the next occur based upon geographic location, stylistic evolution, less-standardized terminology in a time when genres were still developing, and even human error (such as assigning erroneous titles in

[35] *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Fantasia."

publication). It is perhaps more productive in the scope of this treatise to examine J. S. Bach's use of some of these terms and see how he applied them within his own output.

Although the differences between toccatas, preludes, and fantasias are blurred in the historical usage, Bach's manner of composing a toccata is quite distinct from his use of other genres that are historically similar to them. Bach's preludes generally consist of a measured, perpetual-motion figuration over a fairly simple harmonic background. Unlike the toccatas, they do not alternate free and fugal material, but rather stand separate from a single fugue that follows, as in the prelude and fugue pairings found in the *Well-Tempered Clavier*. The prelude section is, in most cases, written with a double bar at the end (unlike in a toccata where a double bar only appears at the close of the entire work). It is obvious that the prelude in Bach's output is set apart from the toccata since Bach's toccatas are continuous works that alternate fugal material with a wide variety of free material (virtuosic flourishes, recitatives, sequences, etc).

Bach's use of the fantasy is also quite different from the toccata. Again, as in the prelude, Bach's fantasies generally tend to be paired with a single fugue (while Bach's toccatas always have more than one fugal or imitative section). Bach's fantasies begin with a free section that is usually quite lengthy—upwards of five minutes of material before the fugue enters—whereas his toccatas begin with a very short free introduction. More importantly, one or two motivic subjects tend to link the material of a Bach fantasy together, whereas in a toccata, the free material is not linked by any one single motive. Probably the most famous example of a fantasy by Bach is the *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue* in D minor, BWV 903 which exhibits the features just mentioned—a lengthy free

section followed by a single fugue. This work is also linked by one thematic idea: chromaticism.

Martin Geck perhaps underestimates the differences between the toccata and fantasia when he implies that Bach's *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue* is simply a better example of the toccata genre. In a chapter devoted to Bach's use of the toccata, Geck writes: "One cannot speak of Bach's toccata art without mentioning the toccatas for clavier [as opposed to the organ toccatas], of which the most important, the *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue* in D Minor, BWV 903, was probably composed in Weimar."[36] Geck goes on to briefly discuss some features of the keyboard toccatas, BWV 910-916, before focusing on the *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue* as an "unrivaled pinnacle of the [toccata] form."[37]

However, as we have seen from a comparison of Bach's use of the toccata and the fantasy, the compositional process involves a fundamentally different approach. The *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue* is indeed a prime example of the fantasy genre, where a single compositional idea (in this case, chromaticism) links the entirety of both the free and fugal material. This difference, along with the others discussed above, leads me to believe that the *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue* cannot be grouped under the toccata genre.

In the course of this discussion many features of the toccata throughout its late sixteenth- to early eighteenth-century history have been explored. These areas include

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[36] Geck, *Life and Work,* 488-489.
[37] Ibid., 489.

terminology, instrumentation, purpose, compositional style, and similarities with other genres. Despite the seemingly broad nature of this discussion it emerges that each one of these areas overlap or are completely dependent on the other. For example, a discussion of terminology necessitates an understanding of purpose and compositional characteristics. Similarly, a discussion of purpose requires the knowledge of compositional characteristics, instrumentation, and venue. Each one of these areas then contributes to the other. This discussion has given the performer of Bach's toccatas a solid background upon which to build an even deeper knowledge of performance conventions in these complex works.

Chapter 2. The Toccata's Journey from Italy to J. S. Bach

How did the toccata come into existence as a genre and why is this important in a discussion of Bach's toccatas? These questions take central importance in the present discussion of the Baroque master's toccatas due to the cause and effect relationship of historical tradition and compositional trends. The way in which the toccata developed throughout history played a large part in the stylistic characteristics that Bach's toccatas would later exhibit (as seen in chapter one). Richard Troeger writes the following:

> Bach of course absorbed not only the general forms, but also the finest details of the different styles he adopted. His use of Italianate embellishments and French ornaments is, in both cases, entirely in the manner of his models. The same is true of his use of the various French dance patterns, of toccata gestures, and of all other national elements.[38]

Therefore, in order to interpret Bach's toccatas successfully a thorough understanding of their stylistic heritage is paramount. Beyond tracing the geographical development of the toccata, this chapter aims to understand what inspired the genre itself. With this knowledge in hand the performer may approach the toccatas from a unique perspective: that of Bach's own models.

Italy

> Searching through different towns, I came at last to this most serene city of Venice. Hearing in the renowned church of San Marco a contest of two organs being played antiphonally with so much ingenuity and elegance, I was transported beyond myself. Eager to meet those two great champions, I stopped at the door where I saw Claudio Merulo and Andrea Gabrieli coming out. Both were

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[38] Richard Troeger, *Playing Bach on the Keyboard: A Practical Guide* (Cambridge, England: Amadeus Press, 2003) 51.

> organists of San Marco. Having devoted myself to them, I decided to emulate them, especially Signor Claudio.[39]

These are the words of Girolamo Diruta (1554-1610), the writer of the first Italian treatise on keyboard music. Diruta was obviously impressed by the level of skill that he heard in the city where the toccata had its beginnings. The church that Diruta mentions is the San Marco Cathedral where Claudio Merulo (1533-1604) and Andrea Gabrieli (c. 1532-1585), two important early composers of the toccata, worked. Robert Judd remarks on this spectacular place and the talent of the musicians who worked there: "Its grand and highly decorative space exudes majesty; the organ music from two instruments that reverberated here aimed at equal grandeur. Andrea Gabrieli and Claudio Merulo represented the pinnacle of that achievement."[40]

This location also marks some of the most important advancements in the development of the toccata. Of the toccata in Venice Dirksen writes, "It would be hard to think of another important genre in music of which the origin and early blossoming were so exclusively connected with a single city."[41]

Claudio Merulo and Andrea Gabrieli are certainly the two most famous composer/performers of the early toccata; however, they were not the first to publish toccatas. A burst of publication activity in Italy characterizes the earliest phase of this genre. The first published keyboard toccatas occurred in 1591 with Sperindio Bertoldo's

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[39] Girolamo Diruta, *Il Transilvano*, Volume I (1593), ed. Murray C. Bradshaw and Edward J. Soehnlen, Institute of Mediaval Music (Henryvilly, Ottowa, and Binningen, 1984), 105.
[40] Robert Judd, "Italy," in *Keyboard Music before 1700*, 2nd ed., Ed. Alexander Silbiger (New York: Routledge, 2004), 235.
[41] Pieter Dirksen, *The Keyboard Music of Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck: Its Style, Significance and Influence* (Utrecht: Koninklijke Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis, 1997), 36.

publication of two toccatas in the volume, *Tocate, ricercari et canzoni francese intavolate per sonar d'organo*.[42] Just two years later, in 1593, the first volume of Girolamo Diruta's treatise on playing keyboard music, *Il Transilvano*, was published in Venice. This work contains thirteen toccatas by various composers.[43] Also in 1593 Andrea Gabrieli published a volume entitled *Intonationi d'organo* that contains four toccatas.[44] In 1598, Merulo published *Toccate d'intavolatura d'organo, libro primo* (Rome), containing nine toccatas, and six years later he published a further ten more toccatas in his second book.[45] Also in 1604, three toccatas by Annibale Padovano (1527-1575) and five by anonymous composers were published in Venice in another volume.[46] These published works, which total more than sixty toccatas from the first thirteen years of its existence, testify to the great popularity of the genre early in its development.[47]

Of the composers mentioned above, the two most prominent were Andrea Gabrieli and Claudio Merulo. Merulo was the most prolific writer of toccatas of his age with a remarkable output of twenty-eight works published under this title. His toccatas contain material that, though not directly linked to J. S. Bach due to disparity in time and geographical location, could certainly be seen as an influence on later toccata writing. These features include elaborate ornamentation, a polyphonic and contrapuntal basis, and

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[42] Sperindio Bertoldo, *Tocate, ricercari et canzoni francese intavolate per sonar d'organo* (Venice: G. Vincenti, 1591).
[43] Diruta, *Il Transilvano*, 1984.
[44] Andrea Gabrieli, *Intonationen für Orgel oder Cembalo*, ed. Pierre Pidoux (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1978) or *Sämtliche Werke für Tasteninstrumente*, ed.Giuseppe Clericetti (Wien: Doblinger, 1997).
[45] Claudio Merulo, *Toccate d'intavolatura d'organo: libro primo e secondo, Roma 1598, 1604* (Firenze: Studio per edizioni scelte, 1981).
[46] Annibale Padovano, *Toccate et Ricercari d'Organo del Eccellentissimo* (Venice, 1604).
[47] Bradshaw, *Origin*, 14.

a sectional organization (switching between ornamented and non-ornamented material).[48] A typical toccata by Merulo is about sixty measures in length, beginning with between two and five measures of lengthy note values within a slow harmonic framework. This slow introduction then leads into a longer section that is characterized by florid sixteenth or thirty-second note motion in one hand with slower note values in the other hand. Often there is a return to the slower, note-against-note motion and then finally a florid section to end the toccata.

Though he was not as prolific as Merulo, Andrea Gabrieli's six toccatas (with an additional two that are also possibly by him) share many features with those of his colleague.[49] Much like Merulo's toccatas they average sixty measures, and include florid ornamentation and imitative material within a sectional frame. They begin with a slow introduction that is characterized by half notes, whole notes or even dotted whole notes. This is followed by eighth note motion that leads quickly to sixteenth-note florid ornamentation (scales and trill figures in a predominantly step-wise fashion). There is usually a return to slower, note-against-note, material later in the toccata. Again, like Merulo's, each of Gabrieli's toccatas ends with florid ornamentation. One difference between these two organists' toccatas is that Merulo makes use of thirty-second notes much more frequently than Gabrieli and therefore his works are more technically demanding for the performer.

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[48] Judd, "Italy," 259.
[49] Gabrieli, *Sämtliche Werke.*

In an age when the keyboard repertoire was just beginning to expand, what would have been the compositional models for these two great organists in Venice composing toccatas? This is the question that we now turn to in order to understand why the toccatas of these masters exhibit specific stylistic characteristics—including a sectional structure, florid ornamentation, and polyphonic material. It can be seen through the many toccatas published between 1591 and 1604 that Venice takes a central role in the early development of this genre. Consequently, an examination of the origins of the toccata should focus on this location.

There are a few arguments surrounding the question of how exactly the toccata came into existence as a genre. It has been established that northern Italy was where this genre originated; however, the issue of why the toccata exhibits certain features such as a sectional structure and a virtuosic style is not answered by location alone. A few of the current thoughts on the origin of the toccata focus on the inspiration provided by vocal models. In a general sense, it is no surprise that the toccata would have its roots in vocal works as it could be argued that all keyboard music came from these traditions. As Alexander Silbiger explains: "When [keyboardists] began exploring two-handed playing, their only existing model would have been polyphonic ensemble music; adaptations of popular ensemble pieces make up a substantial segment of the earliest surviving repertory." [50] Thus, according to Silbiger, the existence of a repertory of keyboard music separate from transcriptions was not a part of the early keyboard practice. It was only later that keyboard music began to take on a repertory of its own. This was first realized

[50] Alexander Silbiger, ed. *Keyboard Music before 1700, 2nd edition* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 11.

through elaborations of liturgical chants, using the chant as a cantus firmus upon which to elaborate. Eventually this reliance on the chant melody gave way; church modes and psalm-tones became the structuring mechanisms of an early keyboard repertory that had finally broken free of its restrictions.[51] The pressing question when confronting the development of the toccata is just how reliant the early toccata was on a structuring mechanism such as a cantus firmus.

There are four main hypotheses on how the toccata originated:

1. The toccata was an improvisation that was preserved for future generations through notation;

2. The toccata was an elaboration on a preexisting Gregorian psalm tone melody which was used as a *cantus firmus* to structure the work;

3. The toccata, while not based on a cantus firmus, is shaped by the psalm mode in which it was written;

4. The toccata developed from elaborations on Italian madrigals.

The first argument is the only one that does not claim directly that vocal models inspired the toccata (although improvisation during this time would have certainly been influenced by vocal ornamentation as well). This theory is one that Erich Valentin and Willi Apel, among others, put forth early in the twentieth century.[52] It is, however, the theory that most scholars would disagree with today. Although toccatas do indeed show characteristics of improvisational practice due to their florid ornamentation, the work of recent scholars has shown that even the earliest toccatas are sophisticated and planned compositions.

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[51] Silbiger, *Keyboard Music*, 11.
[52] Murray Bradshaw, *The Origin of the Toccata* (American Institute of Musicology, 1972), 15.

The next argument takes almost the opposite view from the first. Murray Bradshaw, in his work, *The Origin of the Toccata,* believes that the *cantus firmus* of a preexisting psalm tone melody is present in many, if not all, of the early toccatas and even later, when the genre had spread outside of the borders of Italy by the mid seventeenth century. According to Bradshaw, this melodic structuring feature, although not obvious to the listener, provides the outline upon which a composer designs a toccata.[53] Bradshaw reaches this conclusion by underlining the links between the toccata, falsobordone, and intonation. This intriguing theory calls for a more detailed discussion.

The keyboard genres by the name of falsobordone and intonation were transcriptions and elaborations of liturgical melodies, which were themselves structured upon Gregorian psalm tones. The falsobordone was popular earlier in the 16th century before the intonation began to take its place later in the same century. Bradshaw shows how the intonations by Andrea Gabrieli are very similar to the earlier falsobordone through their shared features of texture, structure, and foundation upon a psalm tone. They do have differences, however, and the largest of these dissimilarities, according to Bradshaw, is the fact that the intonation is based on an "ideal" cantus firmus psalm tone rather than an audible one. With an "ideal" cantus firmus the psalm tone melody is used as a structuring principle but is not audible due to its placement across several voices within the texture. Bradshaw then links the toccata to the traditions of the falsobordone and intonation due to its similar use of texture, structure, and, most importantly, its use of an "ideal" cantus firmus. This progression can be seen in the following table:

[53] Bradshaw, *Origin*, 19-47.

Falsobordone	Structured on Psalm Tone
Intonation	1) Similar to Falsobordone 2) Structured on "Ideal" Cantus Firmus
Toccata	1) Similar to Intonation 2) Structured on "Ideal" Cantus Firmus

Fig. 2.1: The Psalm Tone Evolution of the Toccata According to Bradshaw

Although Bradshaw's argument for a psalm-tone basis in the Venetian toccata is thorough and well-documented, not every scholar agrees with this theory. One such scholar, Frits Noske, claims that Bradshaw's argument is weakened by poor examples:

> The examples given by Bradshaw [are not] convincing. The separate notes of the chant are arbitrarily stretched or shortened, ranging from quavers to ten tied semibreves (a proportion of 1:80!). Unexplained deviations from the psalm tones include repeated mediants and other groups of notes, incomplete or overcomplete endings, notes added in square brackets (to fit the composer's harmony), and a final cadence presented twice at the beginning."[54]

Corroborating Noske's doubt is Pieter Dirksen who, though not dismissing Bradshaw's argument completely, agrees that there are untenable aspects of Bradshaw's musical examples:

> It is as wrong to return to the concept of completely free pieces as to adopt Bradshaw's idea of cantus firmus composition. A degree of compositional freedom is certainly one of the hallmarks of the toccata; however, this freedom is not autonomous but is shaped in relation to its opposite, the bondage of polyphonic modality, from which the toccata derives its structural points of reference. [55]

Dirksen's dissent on this theory brings this discussion to the third theory on the origin of the toccata. Dirksen believes that the structure of early toccatas was indeed

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[54] Frits Noske, *Sweelinck* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 103.
[55] Dirkson, *Keyboard Music*, 49.

based on psalm tone modes, but not strictly on a prescribed 'ideal' *cantus firmus* as Bradshaw claims. In his theory the mode, rather than a preexisting tune, provided a range of notes upon which the composer could freely elaborate.[56] As shown in chapter one, the toccata stems from a preludial function in the liturgy; it helped the singers to find their beginning pitch, thus the solo keyboard toccata would be composed in the same mode as the following chant. Within the confines of this mode, the toccata would find its shape and structure. Mary C. Tilton further explains this concept when she shows how Merulo's toccatas were shaped by the mode that they were composed in.[57] Tilton writes, "As we have thus seen, far from representing the idle meanderings of an improvising organist, the keyboard toccata in the skillful hands of Claudio Merulo became an elaborate composition whose structure was anchored in both the system of modes and the endings of the psalm tones."[58] The point that Tilton and Bradshaw agree upon is the fact that toccatas had a structuring principle, but they disagree on how specific this device was.

The fourth theory of inspiration for the toccata takes us to a different composer, in a different city in Italy, and to a slightly later time period. Alexander Silbiger discusses the Italian madrigal as the inspiration behind the toccatas of Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583-1643). Frescobaldi spent a significant portion of his career in Rome and lived and worked at a slightly later time than Claudio Merulo and Andrea Gabrieli. Subsequently Frescobaldi had different influences on his compositional process. Frescobaldi's two

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[56] Dirksen, *Keyboard Music,* 48.
[57] Mary C. Tilton, "The Influence of Psalm Tone and Mode on the Structure of the Phrygian Toccatas of Claudio Merulo," *Theoria: Historical Aspects of Music Theory* 4 (1989): 106-122.
[58] Tilton, "The Influence of Psalm Tone," 116.

most important collections of toccatas, *Toccate D'Intavolatura di Cimbalo et Organo,* (Rome, 1612) and *Il Secondo Libro di Toccate* (Rome, 1637), feature twenty-three toccatas that remain staples of the harpsichordist's repertoire of today. These toccatas include influences from both Venetian (particularly Merulo) and non-Venetian composers. Two non-venetian composers who most likely influenced Frescobaldi were Giovanni de Macque (c.1548-1614) and Bernardo Pasquini (1637-1710) who wrote "toccata-like pieces" that foreshadow the style of composition found in Frescobaldi's works.[59]

Frescobaldi's toccatas exhibit a far more dramatic style than those of his Venetian predecessors. Judd writes of these toccatas that "the variety of figuration, virtuosity, and imaginative variation over the span of both short sections and longer designs is remarkable."[60] This variety and virtuosity manifests itself throughout a highly fragmented structure. Dramatic intensity is furthered through the use of dissonant intervals such as the tritone and half step. Virtuosic scalar passages appear in bursts of activity (rather than evenly throughout as in the Venetian toccatas) and sweep across the entire range of the keyboard. Thus, although Frescobaldi's toccatas were inspired by prior masters of the genre, the level of dramatic expression in these toccatas goes far beyond previous examples of the genre.

Given the evidence of compositional style found in Frescobaldi's toccatas, it is obvious that these compositions were not inspired by the same sources as the Venetian

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[59] Anthony Newcomb, "Frescobaldi's Toccatas and Their Stylistic Ancestry," *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 111 (1984-1985): 32-35.
[60] Judd, "Italy", 288.

toccatas. Silbiger believes that Bradshaw's argument for a *cantus firmus*, while perhaps valid for the Venetian toccatas, "breaks down" when applied to later examples of the genre.[61] It would seem that Bradshaw anticipated this argument against his thesis when he writes: "With their frequent changes of harmony, tonality, melody, and rhythms, as well as their sectional structure, Frescobaldi's compositions belong unmistakably to the early Baroque; only a few reveal an ideal *cantus firmus* structure."[62] Bradshaw goes on to offer an explanation for the lack of a psalm tone cantus firmus as a governing principle for the structure of Frescobaldi's toccatas, claiming that this was due to a different, non-liturgical function that Frescobaldi's toccatas had. When examining Frescobaldi's toccatas, then, the Gregorian psalm tone basis does not work, as a *cantus firmus* structure cannot always be detected.

The question of how Frescobaldi structured his toccatas remains even after Bradshaw's explanation of the non-liturgical performative function. Silbiger proceeds to offer an explanation of Frescobaldi's toccatas in light of the tradition of composing madrigals. His thesis is that the intabulation (keyboard synthesis of vocal polyphonic parts) included at the end of Frescobaldi's second book of toccatas gives a clue about the possible inspiration for the eleven toccatas that immediately precede it. This intabulation is based upon Arcadelt's madrigal, *Ancidetemi pur*, and shares many characteristics with Frescobaldi's toccatas contained in the same volume, including the fragmented, dramatic

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[61] Alexander Silbiger, "From Madrigal to Toccata: Frescobaldi and the *Seconda Prattica*," In *Critica musica: Essays in honor of Paul Brainard*, Ed. John Knowles, 403-428 (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Gordon and Breach, 1996), 404.
[62] Bradshaw, *Origin*, 70.

style of writing. Richard Troeger agrees with the idea of madrigals inspiring toccatas when he writes, "The toccata, as a genre, derives in large part from keyboard transcriptions of vocal music, such as madrigals that Frescobaldi mentions."[63] Troeger is making reference to the preface of Frescobaldi's first book of toccatas where he says that a toccata should be play rhythmically free like a madrigal.[64] These facts corroborate Silbiger's theory of madrigal inspiration. Indeed, the seemingly haphazard structure of Frescobaldi's toccatas tends to make more sense when considering the influence a dramatic text setting has on a musical structure.

It is not Silbiger's aim to show that Frescobaldi's toccatas are merely "hidden madrigals." Even in Frescobaldi's intabulation of Arcadelt's madrigal, it is impossible to reconstruct the original madrigal due to the fragmented placement of the original voicing. Silbiger summarizes this discussion well when he says that instead of truly being madrigal settings "Frescobaldi's toccatas *resemble* madrigals in their succession of phrases of irregular length and unpredictable, often startling content."[65] Whether or not Silbiger's idea of a madrigal precedent for the toccata is valid, the fact remains that Frescobaldi's toccatas were written in a highly dramatic idiom that surpasses the expression found in the toccatas of Merulo and Gabrieli in Venice. These works would

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[63] Troeger, *Playing Bach,* 56.
[64] Girolamo Frescobaldi, Preface to *Toccate d'intavolatura di cimbalo et organo, libro primo e libro, Roma 1637* (Firenze: Studio per edizioni scelte, 1978), translated in Christopher Stembridge, "Interpreting Frescobaldi. The Notation in the Printed Sources of Frescobaldi's Keyboard Music and its Implications for the Performer," *The Organ Yearbook: A Journal for the Players & Historians of Keyboard Instruments* 34 (2005): 53.
[65] Alexander Silbiger, "From Madrigal to Toccata: Frescobaldi and the *Seconda Prattica*," In *Critica musica: Essays in honor of Paul Brainard*, Ed. John Knowles, 403-428 (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Gordon and Breach, 1996), 412-13. (Emphasis added).

have a strong impact on the direction that toccata writing would take as the genre made its way past the northern borders of Italy.

The four theories just described for the inspiration behind the first toccatas—"frozen" improvisation, psalm tune cantus firmi, psalm tone modes, and Italian madrigals—have provided many details about the earliest toccatas in Italy. The Venetian toccatas were most likely inspired by their liturgical purpose of setting the pitch for the vocal work that would follow. Frescobaldi's toccatas probably escaped this liturgical function and instead imitated more dramatic secular works such as madrigals. Due to their earlier genesis and differing function, Venetian toccatas do not contain the great variety of motivic and rhythmic content found in Frescobaldi's works. The toccatas that would follow, in southern Germany and further to the north, chose either the earlier Venetian or the Frescobaldian models; it is to these works that we now turn.

Southern Germany

Some of the first Italian musicians to publish toccatas, including Annibale Padovano and Giovanni Gabrieli, were employed at courts in southern Germany (Graz and Münich respectively). Their work abroad could certainly have influenced the native German composer/performers working in southern Germany since toccatas from this region also exhibit the Venetian characteristics of florid ornamentation, a sectional structure, and imitative features. The toccatas of Adam Steigleder (1561-1633), Hans Leo

Hassler (1564-1612), Jacob Hassler (1569-1622), and Christian Erbach (1573-1635), for example, follow these Venetian compositional techniques.[38]

Frescobaldi's more dramatic style of writing toccatas seemed to have an even more tangible effect in southern Germany, however. This was due to the work of Johann Jacob Froberger (1616-1667), the most influential southern German composer of toccatas. As a court organist in Vienna, Froberger was in a position to have a great deal of influence on those around him in southern Germany; however, his influence did not stop there. He corresponded with many musicians throughout Germany, and therefore had an even wider influence.[66]

Much of Froberger's toccata style derived from Frescobaldi due to the fact that he studied directly with the Italian master in Rome. Frescobaldi was not the only composer that influenced Froberger's toccata writing, however. Froberger also included features of the Venetian style and of the French unmeasured preludes of Louis Couperin (c.1626-1661). This multifaceted style was a result of Froberger's wide travels to Italy, France, the Spanish Netherlands, and England.[67] Froberger's multi-national influence then had a great impact on both southern and northern German organists who composed toccatas after him.

Froberger's output of toccatas is not as large as Frescobaldi's; nevertheless nearly twenty toccatas can be attributed to him (found in diverse manuscripts from 1649, 1656,

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[38] Bradshaw, Origin, 72.
[66] John Butt, "Germany and the Netherlands," in Alexander Silbiger, ed. *Keyboard Music before 1700,* 2nd edition (New York: Routledge, 2004), 192.
[67] Butt, "Germany and the Netherlands," 184.

and 1693).[68] The style found in his toccatas, as a result of his travels, is one that is highly dramatic (showing Frescobaldi's influence), yet is shaped by the notes of a psalm tune mode (evidence of Venetian influence), and includes metric freedom (revealing Couperin's influence).[69] Froberger's toccatas are an average of sixty measures long—much like the earlier Venetian and Frescobaldian toccatas; they are organized, once again, in sections that vary in character.

A typical toccata by Froberger begins with a widely-spaced triadic chord with some passing tones and arpeggiations lasting one or two measures. This leads into a section of improvisational figuration, often including imitative features. An imitative/fugal section, another improvisatory section, and finally a concluding fugal section follow. In the course of this structure Froberger uses a wide variety of rhythmic subdivisions from whole notes to thirty-second notes and dotted figures. Scales and imitative patterns span the entire range of the keyboard and contain some chromaticism (though Froberger's compositional texture is not as heavily chromatic as Frescobaldi's).

Beyond these relatively predictable features found in Froberger's highly expressive toccatas, there is one feature that is unique to them: several of Froberger's toccatas include a concluding section in a compound meter. This is a feature that sets his toccatas apart from those of Frescobaldi and earlier Venetian composers who rarely used compound meters in their toccatas. Froberger would not be the last one to use compound meter; north German composers, such as his friend Weckmann, also use compound

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[68] Johann Jacob Froberger, *Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Clavier- und Orgelwerke*, ed. Siegbert Rampe (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1993).
[69] Bradshaw, *Origin*, 80-81, and Butt, "Germany and the Netherlands," 183-185.

meter. Most importantly this feature connects Froberger to J. S. Bach; Bach uses compound meter in several of the final fugues of his keyboard toccatas.

Though not the only southern German composer to publish toccatas, Froberger is one of the most important links in the path that the toccata took from Italy to Germany in J. S. Bach's time. From southern Germany, the toccata spread to northern German organists such as Weckmann, Reincken, and Buxtehude, finally reaching J. S. Bach. These composers will be discussed in more detail later; however, due to chronological considerations we now turn our attention to the toccata's place in the Netherlands and the work of Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562-1621) in particular.

The Netherlands and the Early North German Organ School

Probably the most famous composer from the late Renaissance to early Baroque Netherlands was Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck. Coincidentally, he published a fair number of toccatas. According to John Butt, "Sweelinck's historical significance would be assured even if not one note of his music were to have survived."[70] This is true due to his excellent reputation as a teacher; his skills in teaching drew organ students from all over Germany, and it is through the traditions he passed on to his students that his musical legacy had its fullest impact. This is not to say that his music, on its own, would not have made a lasting impression on the musical world; far from it, Sweelinck's work in the Netherlands was particularly admirable in the areas of vocal and keyboard repertoire. Butt says of Sweelinck's output that "…in Sweelinck we have a composer who not only

[70] Butt, "Germany and the Netherlands," 166.

absorbed the vocal tradition but also established the keyboard idiom as a viable pedagogic tool."[71] Thus Sweelinck is incredibly important to the growing repertoire of the keyboardist in the late Renaissance and early Baroque periods.

Sweelinck also had a formidable reputation as a performer, giving organ concerts nearly every day at the Oude Kerk (the first church built in Amsterdam and also the oldest building in this city). The Calvinist "Alteration" in 1578 ended the use of the organ in worship services,[72] but town officials, still wishing to exhibit their outstanding organs to visitors, displayed these instruments instead in public concerts. This was the way in which Sweelinck gained an outstanding reputation as a performer.[73] Thus it is through a multi-faceted talent as a composer, teacher, and performer that Sweelinck secured his place in the musical scene of his time and beyond.

Sweelinck published twelve toccatas during his lifetime (with two additional toccatas attributed to him as well, although not authenticated). Of these toccatas, none has a pedal part, therefore they could be called "manualiter" toccatas, similarly to J. S. Bach's toccatas BWV 910-916. Sweelinck's toccatas average 85 measures in length (although they vary from 30 to 138 measures). They typically begin with a slow section containing short imitative motives passed between the hands. There is a gradual reduction of note values as the rhythm accelerates toward the close of each toccata. This occurs as scales and longer imitative motives make use of the entire range of the keyboard. There is

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[71] Butt, "Germany and the Netherlands," 166.
[72] Noske, *Sweelinck*, 3.
[73] Butt, "Germany and the Netherlands," 167.

usually a slower, imitative section that interrupts the sixteenth-note motion; however the faster rhythms return to end the piece.

Sweelinck's style in the toccatas that was just described is Italian, or more specifically, Venetian. According to Noske, Sweelinck's toccatas do not mirror the most famous Venetian toccata composer, Merulo, but rather "the more rationally organized *toccate* and *intonationi* by Andrea Gabrieli."[74] Sweelinck's toccatas are certainly not as dramatic or rhapsodic as Merulo's due to a lesser variety of material and conservative use of harmony; however, it could also be argued that they do show many similarities to Merulo's toccatas, including their treatment of imitative and fugal episodes and similar display of passagework. Sweelinck's assumed choice to emulate one of the lesser-known toccata composers instead of the more famous Merulo is, in Dirksen's words, "explained by his compositional outlook. His music shows a constant striving for clarity which is deliberately blurred in Merulo's toccatas."[75]

This clarity could be due to their compositional purpose since Sweelinck's toccatas were most likely written for pedagogical reasons. We already know that Sweelinck devoted considerable energy to teaching; however, there are some features of the toccatas themselves that indicate a pedagogical purpose as well. Noske points out that "The almost calculated display of virtuosic patterns, such as scales, triadic motifs, trills, and quickly repeated notes—often alternating between the right and left hand—points to

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[74] Noske, *Sweelinck*, 98.
[75] Dirksen, *Keyboard Music*, 39.

them having been written for pedagogical purposes." Also implicating this hypothesis is the existence of fingering in some manuscripts of these toccatas.[76]

This discussion of Sweelinck's style in the toccatas is important because of his lasting influence on the early generation of the north German organ school which would in turn influence J. S. Bach, the last member of this school. This influence was most effectively carried out, predictably, through Sweelinck's teaching. Two of his most famous pupils were Samuel Scheidt (1587-1654) and Heinrich Scheidemann (c.1595-1663). Scheidt, who studied with Sweelinck from 1607 to 1608, was most influenced by the Dutch master's rich polyphony, chromatic countersubjects, attention to detail, and unity of material. Beyond assimilating these features, Scheidt also developed Sweelinck's style, taking counterpoint to a higher academic and abstract level. His works also followed concurrent Italian trends.[77]

Heinrich Scheidemann, who studied with Sweelinck from 1611 to 1614 and held all four organist posts in Hamburg, tended to depart from Sweelinck's models; however, he did continue the Dutch organist's high-quality tradition of polyphonic mastery, formal organization, and mathematical proportion. Scheidemann, much like Scheidt, absorbed current Italian trends in his compositions, particularly in his canzonas and toccatas (although only two extant examples remain of both of these genres).[78]

These two organists passed on their knowledge to the next generation, including Matthias Weckmann (c. 1616-1674) and Jan Adam Reincken (1623-1722), who in turn

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[76] Noske, *Sweelinck*, 98.
[77] Butt, "Germany and the Netherlands," 175-178.
[78] Ibid., 176-180.

had a great deal of influence on the young J. S. Bach. Noske writes of Reincken's continuation of Sweelinck's musical influence in more detail:

> A particularly brilliant organist, Reincken seems to have played Sweelinck's works continuously during his long life (1623-1722); so it is quite possible that the young Bach, who visited Hamburg to hear the aged Reincken playing on the splendid organ of St Catherine's Church, became acquainted with Sweelinck's music. [79]

One aspect of Sweelinck's influence on the north German organ school that is often mentioned is the fact that his direct pupils did not contribute much to the toccata repertoire both in quantitative and qualitative terms. As Noske remarks: "Curiously enough, none of Sweelinck's German pupils took much interest in the toccata. It was only the generation after them (Weckmann, Reincken, Buxtehude; and, in south Germany, Froberger) which cultivated and developed this keyboard genre."[80] Explaining this lack of continuation is Dirksen who points to a fundamental difference in the type of organ position that the Hamburg organists held. The Hamburg organists, instead of playing organ concerts in their churches, as Sweelinck did, played during the service. Thus, the north German equivalent to the toccata, the shorter preambulum, was more suited to their purposes. "It was only with the generation after the Sweelinck pupils that the Frescobaldian/Frobergian toccata and imitative forms were fused with the local praeambulum into the typical North German praeludium/toccata of the second half of the 17th century."[81]

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[79] Noske, *Sweelinck*, 130.
[80] Ibid., 103.
[81] Dirksen, *Keyboard Music*, 606.

From Dirksen's remark, it would seem that he believes the southern German school, particularly in the composition of toccatas, had a larger influence on the young Bach; however, it should be reaffirmed that Sweelinck could have had a direct influence on Bach due to Reincken's performances of the Dutch master's works. In fact, Dirksen's does say that Bach was particularly influenced by the contrapuntal aspects of Sweelinck's style due to the similarity between these two composers in their manipulation of polyphonic material:

> It is certainly no coincidence that the long-standing tradition of polyphonic keyboard composition found its culmination in the work of Johann Sebastian Bach. His keyboard style appears as a mirror of Sweelinck's. With both composers a restricted geographical radius did not prevent them from absorbing a multitude of foreign influences equaled by no other contemporary and forging them into a fascinating synthesis.[82]

Therefore, the idea that Sweelinck played a role in shaping Bach's compositional style is one that has much evidence to support it. Even if Sweelinck's toccatas were not specifically influential on Bach's own works by this name, the Dutch master's style as a whole was one that profoundly shaped Bach's compositional style as a whole.

The Later North German Organ School

As it has already been mentioned, the early members of the north German organ school who studied with Sweelinck did not add many toccatas to the keyboardist's repertoire. Their pupils, the next generation of north German organists, however, revisited this genre much more frequently. This generation of composers is the one that

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[82] Dirksen, *Keyboard Music,* 608.

had perhaps the most influence on J. S. Bach since their careers were ending around the same time that Bach was beginning his own. The young Bach had a zeal for learning from the masters around him, as evidenced by his traveling hundreds of miles on foot to hear these legendary musicians. The three composers we will focus on from this later north German organ school are Matthias Weckmann (c.1616-1674), Dieterich Buxtehude (c.1637-1707), and Johann Adam Reincken (1643-1722). An examination of these three composers brings us back to the influence of Italy and southern Germany on the toccata's journey to Bach.

Weckmann, a pupil of Heinrich Schütz (1585-1672) and therefore a grand-pupil of Giovanni Gabrieli, was mainly influential as a purveyor of Froberger's style. His interactions with Froberger included a musical duel which ended in a lasting friendship between the two composers. The consequence of their friendship resulted in Weckmann "introducing elements of Froberger's toccata and suite style to north Germany."[83] Additionally, it should not be overlooked that Weckmann had ties to the Sweelinck tradition. His studies with several of Sweelinck's pupils, including Jacob Praetorius (1586-1651) and Heinrich Scheidemann, took place between 1633 and 1637. This brings the possibility of a link between Sweelinck's Venetian-influenced toccata style and the north German organ school in combination with the Frescobaldian style of composing that Froberger passed on to Weckmann.

There are at least six toccatas and one "toccata vel praeludium" that are attributed to Weckmann. They exhibit features that are both similar to Froberger's toccatas and to

[83] Butt, "Germany and the Netherlands," 192.

the Venetian tradition brought north by Sweelinck. Weckmann's toccatas contain a great deal of variety just as Froberger's do, yet their more conservative use of harmony and longer ranging scalar figures mimic the Venetian style. Both Weckmann's and Froberger's toccatas are an average of 60 measures (Sweelinck's are generally longer). Weckmann's toccatas also have a sectionalized form that often contains several contrasting time signatures; these varying meters often include a compound time signature as well, much like Froberger's toccatas (Sweelinck's toccatas, once again, do not contain this feature.) Thus, Weckmann's toccatas lean more towards the southern German tradition and ultimately the tradition of Frescobaldi as transmitted by Froberger, yet they owe some debt to the Venetian style as brought to northern Europe through Sweelinck.

Another north German organist who had a great impact on J. S. Bach's early compositions was Johann Adam Reincken. He is an important link between the first and third generations of the north German organ school due to his acquaintance with both Scheidemann (Sweelinck's pupil), and J. S. Bach. Reincken, who was a pupil of Scheidemann, was most influenced by his teacher but, much like Weckmann, he was also influenced by Froberger.[84]

Although Reincken wrote only a few toccatas, his overall compositional influence on the young J.S. Bach is extremely important. As a teenager Bach traveled to Hamburg several times to hear Reincken perform. In this way Bach listened to works of earlier

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[84] Butt, "Germany and the Netherlands," 193, and Gerald Stares Bedbrook, *Keyboard Music from the Middle Ages to the Beginnings of the Baroque* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), 134.

north German composers—including those by Buxtehude—being played by the talented Reincken. Bach was also influenced directly by Reincken's works. Reincken's G major toccata, which is perhaps the one toccata that has the most in common with Bach's own keyboard toccatas, appears in a musical anthology of Bach's brother.[85] Specific details of this toccata are discussed in chapter four, but a few features should be mentioned here. The scope and character of this toccata reaches nearly that of Bach's keyboard toccatas. It is 154 measures long and organized in clearly defined sections, alternating improvisatory and imitative material. There are two fully developed fugues in this work. The improvisatory material between these fugues is characterized by a single motivic idea, much as in Bach's toccatas (as opposed to earlier toccatas where more variety of gesture is found in the improvisatory sections). In short, due to the fact that this toccata has so much in common with Bach's toccatas, this work could even be claimed to be Bach's immediate model as he wrote the seven keyboard toccatas.

Also influential on Bach was the great organist Dieterich Buxtehude (c.1637-1707). As the organist at the Marienkirche in Lübeck for almost forty years, Buxtehude built a strong reputation in early Baroque Germany. Indeed, Bach must have held this composer in high esteem: in 1705, Bach traveled by foot from Arnstadt to Lübeck (a distance of 240 miles) to hear Buxtehude perform. Besides Bach's own meetings with this master of the organ, Buxtehude's friendship with Weckmann and Reincken shows

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[85] For the similarities between Reincken's G major toccata and Bach's toccatas see David Schulenberg, *The Keyboard Music of J. S. Bach,* 2d ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 98. On Bach's brother's anthology see Christoph Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician* (New York: W. W. Norton Company, 2000), 64.

how he was a part of the most influential circle leading to J. S. Bach. Among these three composer/performers—Weckmann, Reincken, and Buxtehude—it was Buxtehude who arguably had the most influence overall on J. S. Bach. Butt points to the claim of another scholar when he says: "Phillip Spitta profiled Buxtehude as the most important influence on Bach's organ music."[86]

Buxtehude wrote five toccatas. Two are written without a pedal part while the remaining three contain a third line for the organ pedals. The two without pedals are the Toccata in G major, BuxWV 164 and Toccata in G major, BuxWV 165. The second of these toccatas, BuxWV 165, is more comparable in length to Bach's toccatas (103 measures), but it does not share the motivic variety and sectional structure of Bach's works. The first, BuxWV 164, has more similarities with Bach's manualiter toccatas due to its variety of musical gestures organized into distinct sections; however, this toccata is much shorter than Bach's manualiter toccatas and subsequently does not develop the variety of musical ideas nearly as thoroughly as Bach's toccatas.

The three toccatas that do contain pedal parts are perhaps better viewed as a precedent for Bach's own toccata writing due to their length and development of various musical ideas. They contain much virtuosic, improvisatory, and also fugal material that strongly resembles Bach's own writing in the seven keyboard toccatas. They do not, however, show the same high degree of organization that Bach's toccatas show. Many times the fugal material is limited to only a few measures before lengthy improvisatory sections appear. There seems to be no planned succession of musical ideas as in Bach's

[86] Butt, "Germany and the Netherlands," 196.

works, which alternate between improvisatory and imitative sections. Instead, the structure seems to be based on the whim of the performer as it would in a truly improvised work. In short, the musical material that Buxtehude uses is highly similar to Bach's in his use of figuration, fugal writing, and virtuosity, but the form is far less structured than in Bach's works.

Although Buxtehude's toccatas do not seem to be the inspiration behind the structural features of Bach's toccatas, the praeludiums of Buxtehude show more similarities. Buxtehude wrote twenty-two praeludiums of which all but one contains a pedal part. According to Butt the praeludiums (rather than the toccatas) of Buxtehude show "a further development of the Froberger toccata model, with more strongly profiled distinctions between fugal and free sections."[87] Indeed, the praeludiums show an almost astonishing similarity to Bach's toccatas in their use of a sectional structure that alternates free and fugal material. The one praeludium without a pedal part, BuxWV 163 in G minor, is so similar in length, sectional structure, and idiom that it could even be confused for a keyboard toccata of Bach.[88]

Buxtehude's reliance on the model of southern Italian composers, including Frescobaldi and Froberger, and his development of the *stylus phantasticus* are the two features of Buxtehude's works that would go on to influence Bach's toccatas the most. As Riedel points out: "Finally, the compositions of Johann Sebastian Bach, especially the earlier toccatas, as well as the later works in the *stilus gravis*—i.e., the Musical Offering

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[87] Butt, "Germany and the Netherlands," 196
[88] This work is discussed in more detail in the following chapter, The *Stylus phantasticus* in the Toccatas, BWV 910-916, 25-28.

and the Art of Fugue, may be considered the culmination of this [Buxtehude's] tradition."[89]

Germany of J. S. Bach's Early Career

In the course of this chapter we have traced the journey that the toccata took, both in terms of time and space. The following map shows the geographical progression of the toccata as it started in Italy in the early 1600's, finally reaching Bach by the early 1700's:

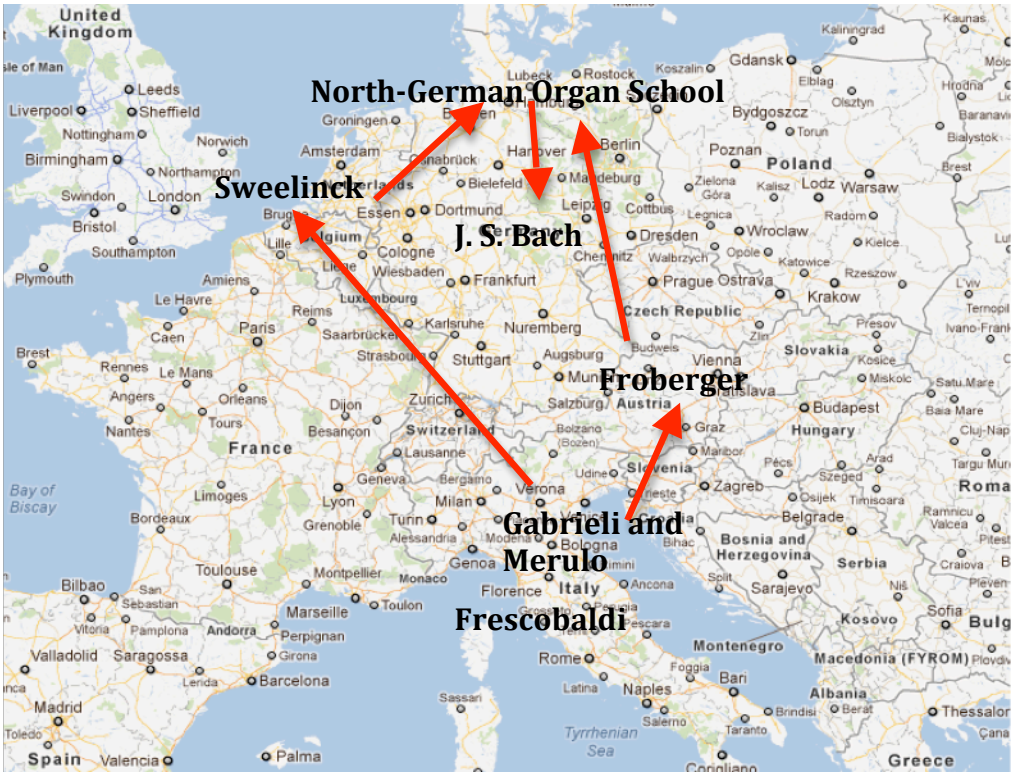

Fig. 2.2: The Toccata's Journey from Italy to Bach (Google Maps, accessed April 3, 2012: https://maps.google.com/maps?hl=en&authuser=0)

[89] Friedrich W. Riedel, "The Influence and Tradition of Frescobaldi's works in the Transalpine Countries," in *Frescobaldi Studies*, ed. Alexander Silbiger (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987), 229.

Curiously, J. S. Bach's output of toccatas represents the end of the use of this genre in the Baroque period: "All these compositions [from Merulo to Buxtehude] led ultimately to those by J. S. Bach."[90] His work can then be seen as a culmination of the genre, the seven keyboard examples of which are the crowning jewels in the Baroque toccata repertoire. It is, however, only fair to mention that there were some composers contemporary to J. S. Bach who did write toccatas, including Gottfried Walther (1684-1747) and Gottlieb Muffat (1690-1770), yet the examples of this genre—contemporary with or after J. S. Bach—are very few. It is certain that by the time of Bach, the genre was on the decline.[91]

Despite their fading popularity, Bach continued to compose a significant number of these works, including the seven keyboard toccatas under discussion (BWV 910-916), a keyboard toccata as the opening to the Partita No. 6 in E minor (BWV 830), plus four organ toccatas (BWV 538, 540, 564 and 565). The seven keyboard toccatas were composed early in Bach's life, between 1700 and 1714, when Bach was only in his twenties. They do not seem to be composed as a set since their key signatures do not follow any particular scheme. There are no existing manuscripts in Bach's own hand of these works, and the only reason they survive today is mainly due to a number of copies made by his pupils.[92]

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[90] Bradshaw, *Origin*, 84.
[91] Ibid., 85.
[92] Schulenberg, *Keyboard Music,* 97.

Due to their early date of composition, these toccatas significantly reflect traditions of the seventeenth century.[93] Much like the toccatas of earlier composers, "for Bach the word toccata evidently continued to refer to a more diverse, heterogeneous succession of sections, some of which constitute self-sufficient movements, others serving as bridges or transitions."[94] Although they are not based on a Psalm tone as were the early Venetian toccatas "they are inconceivable without these prototypes."[95] While Bradshaw is quick to point out their Venetian heritage, given his unique perspective on the development of the toccata, it is clear that Bach's toccatas were most likely influenced by a variety of sources. As David Schulenberg underlines, "Bach's toccatas are closer to a small group of north-German toccatas, especially one by Reincken [...] that resemble the early-Baroque type in being composed of distinct contrasting sections."[96] These comments by eminent scholars point to the multi-national influence previously discussed. The north German school culminating in Bach was therefore influenced by both the Frescobaldian tradition as disseminated by Frobeger as well as by the Venetian tradition as furthered by Sweelinck.

The evidence found in the score to these works may provide a few more clues about their historical genesis. Although they are far lengthier works than those of Bach's predecessors (averaging 180 measures), the toccatas BWV 910-916 share many of the characteristics of toccatas from previous generations. They are written in a sectional

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[93] Troeger, *Playing Bach*, 79.
[94] Schulenberg, *Keyboard Music,* 98.
[95] Troeger, *Playing Bach*, 79.
[96] Schulenberg, *Keyboard Music,* 98.

form, alternating improvisatory with contrapuntal material. Daring harmonies, virtuosic scalar patterns, use of a wide range of rhythmic and motivic features, and virtuosity again link these works to their seventeenth-century antecedents. Each toccata opens with a short section of free material—much like Froberger's or Weckmann's toccatas—followed by contrapuntal material, another free section, and a fully worked-out fugue, or a series of sequences. Finally, each toccata ends with another fugue, usually the most overtly virtuosic fugue of the toccata (and many times in a compound meter, as in Froberger's works). Therefore, while Bach's toccatas are the most lengthy and dramatic examples of the genre in the Baroque period, their debt to a seventeenth-century tradition of toccata writing is extremely important.

From the San Marco Cathedral in Venice, to the courts of Rome, to Vienna, Amsterdam, and Hamburg, the toccata kept its most important characteristics: virtuosity through improvisational material and counterpoint within a sectional structure. As a closing remark, the words of Johann Joachim Quantz offer a unique perspective on how J. S. Bach's compositional style was shaped that is much more immediate than any scholar could give today. In his treatise *On Playing the Flute* Quantz says:

> Toward the middle of the last century there were already some celebrated persons who began to effect improvement of musical style, partly by visiting and profiting from Italy and France themselves, partly by imitating the works and taste of these meritorious foreign lands. The organ and harpsichord players, especially Froberger and after him Pachelbel among the latter, and Reincken, Buxtehude, Bruhns, and some others among the former, wrote almost the first very tasteful instrumental pieces of their time for their instruments. In particular the art of playing the organ, inherited in large part from the Netherlanders, had already been carried a long way at about this time by the able men enumerated above and by some others. Finally the admirable Johann Sebastian Bach in more recent times brought it to its greatest perfection. We should hope that, with his death, it will

> not suffer decay or ruin because of the small number of those who apply themselves to it.[97]

Thus, as is typical throughout Bach's compositional output, his toccatas are not only a reflection of, but also an elaboration on the ideas of those who came before him.

[97] Johann Joachim Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*. 2nd ed., trans. with notes and an introduction by Edward R. Reilly, (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), 338-339.

Chapter 3. The *Stylus phantasticus* in the Toccatas, BWV 910-916

> The secret of baroque musicianship is imagination and fantasy within the boundaries of style. [98]

This statement by Robert Donington, one of the most respected authors on Baroque performance practice, could not be more truthful especially in relation to the toccatas of J. S. Bach. It certainly takes a great deal of "imagination and fantasy" to play Bach's toccatas with their fantastic flourishes and improvisatory feel. But perhaps the most complex aspect of Donington's comment is the last one he mentions, performing "within the boundaries of style." A musician and scholar contemporary with J. S. Bach, Johann Mattheson (1681-1764), also has some thoughts on this subject:

> Performance is based now upon the investigation of good precepts and models, of which there is no lack for whomsoever will only choose and appropriate them. *One must have a secure, clear and pure concept of each main style*, according to the cited principles, maintain good order therein, not improperly mix impression and expression with one another, nor place his troops under a foreign banner.[99]

Therefore these two scholars, one modern and one historical, establish the importance of knowing the features of the style that define a particular piece in order to achieve a good performance. This is not an easy task, yet it is one that will yield great rewards to the performer and audience. We turn to a discussion of the concept of style in the Baroque; this will give a background to the subsequent exploration of the particular style in which the toccatas of J. S. Bach were composed: the *stylus phantasticus*.

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[98] Robert Donington, *Baroque Music: Style and Performance* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1982), 6.
[99] Ernest C. Harriss, *Johann Mattheson's Der vollkommene Capellmeister: A Revised Translation with Critical Commentary* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981), 225 [emphasis added].

Baroque Concepts of Style

Style is, of course, a rather broad term since it encompasses aspects as diverse as a particular performer's style of execution to the musical style of a particular genre, time period, or composer. These broad features of style aside, this chapter focuses particularly on the Baroque concept of defining musical style with a concentration on compositional features. The Baroque concept of style was one of describing compositional aspects that were a result of the purpose, location, personality, mood, and genre of each musical work.[100]

During the late renaissance and early Baroque periods the awareness of a plethora of musical styles began to manifest itself in the writings of prominent theorists of the time. These theorists and lexicographers became intent on classifying musical genres into categories based on the particular style that they exhibited. Marco Scacchi, an Italian musician who worked in northern Europe, defined three main stylistic areas called the church, theater, and chamber styles.[101] Within these three areas additional sub-classifications were defined. One of the first scholars to define the sub-styles under these three headings was Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680) in his encyclopedic work on music, *Musurgia universalis* (1650).[102] Included in his discussion are nine sub-classifications of musical style: *stylus ecclesiasticus, canonicus, motecticus, phantasticus, madrigalescus, melismaticus, hyporchematicus, symphoniacus*, and *dramaticus/recitativus*.

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[100] *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians,* 2nd ed., s.v. "Style."
[101] Harriss, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, 189-190.
[102] Athanasius Kircher, *Musurgia universalis*, (New York: G. Olms, 1970), 585-597.

These nine style classifications were a popular way of thinking about musical features throughout the Baroque period with many theorists after Kircher continuing to refer to these sub-styles. Some of these theorists were Johann Matthesson (1681-1764), Tomás Baltazar Jankova (1669-1741), Sébastien de Brossard (1655-1730), and Johann Gottfried Walther (1684-1748). The work of these scholars gives us a way to understand specific musical styles as they applied to a variety of musical genres in the Baroque.

The toccata is listed as an example of the fourth sub-style listed in Kircher's *Musurgia*: the *stylus phantasticus*. The toccata's stylistic association with the *stylus phantasticus,* which belongs to Scacchi's main stylistic classification, theatrical style,[103] continued to be upheld through the writings of theorists immediately following Kircher, including Jankova, Brossard, and Mattheson. This categorization of the toccata is also confirmed in our age; in a listing of the genres in which Bach composed, Richard Troeger divides these genres by musical style. Under the heading "Free Style (*stylus phantasticus*)" Troeger includes Bach's preludes, toccatas, and fantasias.[104]

With the knowledge of the style under which Bach's toccatas are classified, the *stylus phantasticus*, we can now work to discover a more "secure, clear and pure concept"[105] of this style and apply it as an aid in performance. In this effort we will examine two of the most important definitions of the *stylus phantasticus* in use during Bach's age: those by Athanasius Kircher and Johann Mattheson.

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[103] Harriss, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, 216-219.
[104] Richard Troeger, *Playing Bach on the Keyboard: A Practical Guide* (Cambridge, England: Amadeus Press, 2003), 48.
[105] Harriss, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, 225.

Defining the term "*Stylus Phantasticus*"

Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680) was a German Jesuit who was startlingly erudite in many disciplines, including science, mathematics, geography, and music. He was a highly original thinker and dedicated his life to a gathering of facts and ideas on a truly grand scale, surpassing his contemporaries in his scholarly pursuits. His encyclopedic works are what he is remembered for today, and justly so. Paula Findlen writes: "He was a man who nimbly gathered data, absorbed new methodologies, and recognized what was interesting to know by the standards of his time."[106]

Kircher's work should certainly be taken into account when studying the music from this period because of the far-reaching influence that his publications had. One reason why Kircher's work was so influential was that Kircher spent most of his life in Rome, an important stop on the European tours of eminent scholars and musicians alike. It is intriguing to note that one of these visitors was the composer Johan Jacob Froberger (1616-1667), who—as discussed in chapter two—had a seminal role in bringing the toccata to Germany.[107]

The encyclopedic work of Kircher that matters most to musicians is his *Musurgia universalis* (1650), a monolithic two-volume work containing over 1,200 pages on every musical subject imaginable. Kircher's definition of the *stylus phantasticus* appears in the course of a discussion of the nine sub-styles in music (already listed above). His definition is as follows:

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[106] Paula, Findlen, ed. *Athanasius Kircher: The Last Man Who Knew Everything* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 8.
[107] John Fletcher, "Athanasius Kircher and his 'Musurgia Universalis' (1650)" *Musicology* 7 (1982), 74.

> The fantastic style is suitable for instruments. It is the most free and unrestrained method of composing; it is bound to nothing, neither to words nor to a melodic subject; it was instituted to display genius and to teach the hidden design of harmony and the ingenious composition of harmonic phrases and fugues; it is divided into those [pieces] that are commonly called fantasias, ricercatas, toccatas, and sonatas. For compositions of this type see the pieces in three voices composed by us in book V, fol. 243 and 311 and regard those adapted to the various instruments in book VI, fol. 466, 480, 487.[108]

In this definition Kircher considers four main features of the *stylus phantasticus*: 1) instrumentation, 2) freedom of composition, 3) inclusion of fugal material, and 4) genres that fit under this style classification.

Kircher, while saying the style is "suitable for instruments," does not specify an instrument in particular. This leads to the assumption that he is most likely excluding the eligibility of vocal works from fitting under the *stylus phantasticus*. Further, it can be assumed that Kircher is indicating a solo instrumental association with the *stylus phantasticus* due to the solo instrumental genres he lists at the end of his definition.[109]

The second feature Kircher mentions is the fact that works under the *stylus phantasticus* allow the composer a great deal of freedom since they are not "bound" to words or to a melodic subject. This point is important for a couple of reasons: first it contradicts Bradshaw's argument that toccatas were "bound" to a psalm tune "ideal"

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[108] "Phantasticus stylus aptus instrumentis, est liberrima, & solutissima componendi methodus, nullis, nec verbis, nec subiecto harmonico adstrictus ad ostentandum ingenium, & abditam harmoniae rationem, ingeniosumque harmonicarum clausularum, fugarumque contextum docendum institutus, dividiturque in eas, quas *Phantasias*, *Ricercatas*, *Toccatas*, *Sonatas* vulgò vocant. Cuiusmodi compositiones vide in libro V fol.243.& 311.à nobis composita triphonia fol. 466.480.487. & libr. VI varijs instrumentis accomodatas considera." Athanasius Kircher's definition is translated in Kerala Snyder, *Dieterich Buxtehude: Organist in Lübeck* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1987), 251-252.

[109] Paul Collins, *The Stylus Phantasticus and Free Keyboard Music of the North German Baroque* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2005), 29.

cantus firmus.[110] Second, Mattheson, as we will see later, was to go one step farther and extend this concept of freedom to the performer as well as to the composer.

The third point sets Kircher even more at odds with Mattheson, as we will see shortly in a discussion of the eighteenth-century scholar's definition. Whether or not fugues should be included in the *stylus phantasticus*, which is a "free" style, is a point that not every scholar agrees on. Kircher would almost seem to be contradicting himself in including the fugue in his discussion since he has already said the composer is "bound to nothing." However, Kircher may simply have meant that this style is not bound to a *preexisting* melodic subject; therefore the composer is still free to make his own melodic choices. The fact remains that Kircher considered the fugue to be a part of the *stylus phantasticus*.

The last point of Kircher's definition, genres that fall under this classification, is a typical listing of genres for this style. However, we will see that this list is neither definitive nor complete. Particularly relevant for our purpose is the fact that we can see the toccata is included as an example of the *stylus phantasticus* from the earliest definition of the term. The toccata was subsequently regularly inserted in definitions that would follow this definition by Kircher.

Turning now to Mattheson's definition, it is important to understand that he belonged to a later, and therefore fundamentally different, musical environment from

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[110] See discussion in chapter 2."But the concept of free improvisation in the toccata must be greatly altered, for the composer or organist was guided throughout his composition by one of the most solid of all compositional techniques—a *cantus firmus."* Murry C. Bradshaw, *The Origin of the Toccata* (American Institute of Musicology, 1972), 35.

Kircher. While Kircher's treatise on music was published in 1650, Mattheson's work, *Der Volkommene Capellmeister*, appeared almost a century later, in 1739. Subsequently we will see that he has not only a more elaborate discussion of the *stylus phantasticus*, but also a few different perspectives on the subject.

Johann Mattheson (1681-1764), German composer, scholar, singer, conductor, theorist, and diplomat wrote a number of important treatises on musical thought. He is described by Paul Collins as "the dominant musical progressive in German music theory during the first half of the eighteenth century."[111] *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, Mattheson's most important musical treatise, is a work that encompasses every aspect of music that he believed to be relevant to a church music director. It contains a theory on composing melodies, a doctrine on rhetoric in music, and a description of the "doctrine of the affections," among many other topics.[112] It is defined by Walker in this light: "Among German treatises of the late Baroque, it is equaled in importance only by Walther's *Lexicon* and Fux's *Gradus ad Parnassum."*[113] Mattheson's definition of the *stylus phantasticus* is the following:

> For this style is the freest and least restricted style which one can devise for composing, singing, and playing, since one sometimes uses one idea and sometimes another, since one is restricted by neither words nor melody, but only by harmony, so that the singers' or players' skill can be revealed; since all sorts of otherwise unusual passages, obscure ornaments, ingenious turns and embellishments are produced, without close observations of the beat and pitch, though these do occur on paper; without a regular principal motif and melody, without theme and subject which would be performed; sometimes fast sometimes

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[111] Collins, *The Stylus Phantasticus,* 5.
[112] *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., s.v., "Johann Mattheson."
[113] Paul Walker, *Theories of Fugue from the Age of Josquin to the Age of Bach* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2000), 293-294.

> slow; sometimes with one sometimes with many voice parts; also sometimes a little behind the beat; without meter; yet not without a view to pleasing, to dazzling and to astonishing. Those are the essential characteristics of the fantasy style.[114]

While this is only one paragraph of eleven on the subject of the *stylus phantasticus* found in *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, it is the closest Mattheson comes to giving a concise definition of the term. In order to fully compare Mattheson's ideas with those of Kircher, pertinent sections of the ten remaining paragraphs will be also quoted below. The four areas discussed in Kircher's definition (instrumentation, freedom, fugal material, and genres) are all referenced either in the paragraph just reproduced above or in the remaining paragraphs. In general, in Mattheson's definition of the *stylus phantasticus* he elaborates upon the definition of Kircher.

In the first area, instrumentation, Mattheson adds vocal repertoire to this field whereas Kircher only allowed instruments. In an earlier paragraph Mattheson clarifies this addition of vocal works:

> The name fantasy is normally detested; though we do have a style of writing with this name which is a favorite and which maintains its place **mainly** with the orchestra and on the stage, not only for instruments but also for vocalists.[115]

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[114] "Denn dieser Styl ist die allerfreieste und ungebundenste Setz-Singe und Spiel-Art, die man nur erbenden kan, da man bald auf diese bald auf jene Einfälle geräth, da man sich weder an Worte noch Melodie, obwol an harmonie, bindet, nur damit der Sänger oder Spieler seine Fertigfeit sehen lasse; da allerhand sonst ungewöhnliche Sänge, verstedte Zierrathen, sinnreiche Drehungen und Berbrämungen hervorgebracht werden, ohne eigentliche Beobachtung des Tacts und Tons, unangesehen dieselbe auf dem Papier Platz nehmen; ohne förmlichen haupt-Satz und Unterwurff, ohne Theme und Subject, das ausgeführet werde; bald hurtig bald zögernd; bald ein-bald vielstimmig; bald auch auf eine Furtze Zeit nach dem Tact; ohne Klang-Maasse; doch nicht ohne Ubsicht ze gefatlen, se übereilen und in Berwunderung ze zetzen. Das sind die wesentlichen Abzeichen des fantastischen Styls." In Johann Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister, 1739*, ed. Margarete Reimann (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1954) 88; Translated in Ernest C. Harriss, *Johann Mattheson's Der vollkommene Capellmeister: A Revised Translation with Critical Commentary* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981), 217.

[115] "Der phantastische Nahm ist sonst sehr verhasst; allein wir haben eine Schreib-Art dieses Nahmens, die wol beliebt ist, und **hauptsächlich** ihren Sitz im Orchester und auf der Schaubühne, nicht nur für

With this statement Mattheson seems to be emphasizing the theatrical category that the s*tylus phantasticus* is a part of (as defined by Scacchi). Since both instrumental and vocal works fit under this category it is understandable that Mattheson would think in this manner.

The second area, freedom of composition, is the one that Mattheson upholds but also expands in his definition. Mattheson includes a much more elaborate description of this feature than Kircher; he includes features of performance that should be free in addition to the features of composition that Kircher had already mentioned.

In a separate paragraph Mattheson includes even more details on this subject. First, he describes the fantasy style as improvisatory: "It actually consists not so much in the writing or composing with the pen, as in the singing and playing that occurs spontaneously, or as is said *extempore*."[116] This statement elaborates upon the improvisatory features included in the first paragraph of Mattheson's description. Mattheson continues to focus on improvisation for the next four paragraphs, citing the Italian "prima donnas" as the best example of this type of improvisatory tradition.[117] Through this statement Mattheson focuses on the element of freedom in performance that is an integral part of the *stylus phantasticus*.

Instrumente, sondern auch für Sing-Stimmen behauptet." In Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister,* 87; Translated in Harriss, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister,* 216.

[116] "Er bestehet eigentlich nicht sowol im Setzent oder Componiren mit der Feder, als in einem Singen und Spielen, das aus freiem Geiste, oder, wie man sagt, *ex tempore* geschiehet." In Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister,* 87; Translated in Harriss, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister,* 216.

[117] Harriss, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, 217.

Beyond improvisation as a defining character of this "freest and least restricted style," Mattheson clarifies what he means by "one is restricted by neither words nor melody, but only by harmony" in another paragraph. Mattheson focuses on the freedom of composition that Kircher already underlined a century earlier:

> One is restricted in this style of writing only to the rules of harmony, to no others. Whoever can bring to bear the most artistic embellishments and the rarest inventions does the best.[118]

Later in this same paragraph Mattheson even goes as far as to say that toccatas should not be destined to end in the same key that they begin in; he qualifies this statement by the observation that many do not follow this practice, choosing instead to finish a work in the key they began it in.[119] Freedom of composition, along with freedom of performance, is then a defining feature of the *stylus phantasticus* in Mattheson's view.

The third basic premise that Kircher puts forth, the inclusion of fugal material under the *stylus phantasticus*, is one that Mattheson seems to differ on the most (or that had changed by the time Mattheson was writing his treatise). As Mattheson writes in the paragraph cited at the beginning of this discussion, this type of music should be "without theme and subject." In the paragraph following this statement Mattheson reinforces his position quite forcefully:

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[118] "An die Regeln der harmonie bindet man sich allein den dieser Schreib-Art, sonst an keine. Aber die meisten künstlichen Schmüdkungen und selteneste Fälle anbringen kan, der fährt am besten." In Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister,* 88; Trans. Harriss, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, 217.
[119] Harriss, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, 217

> …those composers who work out formal fugues in their fantasias or toccatas do not maintain the integrity of this style, for nothing is so very contrary to it as order and constraint.[120]

Although Mattheson's statement may appear at first to directly contradict Kircher's inclusion of the fugue in his definition, this is probably not the case. By the time that Mattheson was writing his treatise, the fugue had become a far more structured compositional technique than it was at the time of Kircher. Both scholars would have surely supported the inclusion of imitative passages or even loosely constructed fugues. Most likely, Mattheson's eighteenth-century experience of fugal writing caused him to view the fugue as the antithesis of this freedom. Walker, in his book, *Theories of Fugue from the Age of Josquin to the Age of Bach*, remarks on Mattheson's perspective:

> Mattheson advocated an extremely free approach to the *stylus phantasticus*, even to the point of recommending only occasional passages in regular meter and allowing the piece to begin and end in two different keys. As a result, he held the opinion that 'formal fugues' [förmliche Fugen] should not be introduced into keyboard fantasies and toccatas.[121]

Thus it is the "formal fugue" that Mattheson was advocating against for works in the *stylus phantasticus*. It is important to mention here that the fugues found in Bach's toccatas are far freer than those found in his later works and therefore appropriately reflect the *stylus phantasticus* aesthetic. Troeger writes:

> Bach's early fugues, like the toccatas, are sometimes more discursive, and perhaps more reflective of actual improvisations, than his later fugues, but they

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[120] "…diejenigen Berfasser, welche in ihren Fantaisien oder Toccaten förmliche Fugen durcharbeiten, seinen rechten Begriff von dem vorhabenden Styl begen, als welchem sein Ding so sehr zuwieder ist, denn die Ordnung und der Zwang." In Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister,* 88; Translated in Harriss, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, 217.
[121] Walker, *Theories of Fugue,* 346.

> are not to be discounted on these grounds. The listener or player should accept these works on their own terms.[122]

The fourth and final aspect, discussing genres included in the *stylus phantasticus*, is the point that differs the least from Kircher's definition. Mattheson lists early in his discussion of the fantasy style the "Fantasie, Capriccie, Toccate, Ricercare, etc.," and also "boutades and preludes," as examples of this style. Interesting to note, is the absence of vocal genres in this listing, though he does mention operatic works later in the course of the discussion.[123]

When studying these two definitions of the same concept side-by-side it is important to notice the differences created by almost a century between these scholars' publications. Beyond the issue of the changing nature of the fugue mentioned above, Mattheson tends to focus more on the performer than the composer. Collins remarks: "From being a vehicle for the display of compositional writing, Kircher's stylistic category became primarily a performance-oriented concept for Mattheson, referring especially to extemporary ability."[124] This explanation certainly speaks to the improvisational aspects that Mattheson emphasizes.

Stylus Phantasticus **Influences in J. S. Bach's Keyboard Toccatas**

When examining Bach's keyboard toccatas in light of these definitions it is commonly agreed, as mentioned earlier, that they do continue in the tradition of their

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[122] Troeger, *Playing Bach,* 59.
[123] Harriss, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister,* 216.
[124] Collins, *The Stylus Phantasticus,* 53.

predecessors by the same genre in that they are examples of the *stylus phantasticus*. Recent scholarship frequently makes reference to this style in connection with Bach's toccatas. We can see this in the way Troeger's lists the seven keyboard toccatas of Bach under the heading, "Free Style (*stylus phantasticus*)," and in numerous other scholars' work including that of Martin Geck, David Schulenberg, and Christoph Wolff. Geck mentions the *stylus phantasticus* as an overarching element not only in Bach's toccatas but also in his inventions, sinfonias, and keyboard concertos.[125] David Schulenberg remarks that the toccatas of Bach reflect the German organ tradition (referring to Buxtehude), specifically mentioning the north German use of the *stylus phantasticus*. [126] Similarly, Wolff notes that Buxtehude's use of the *stylus phantasticus* in his organ works was an inspiration to the young Bach.[127]

These citations show how it is generally accepted that Bach made use of this seventeenth-century compositional style, yet they do not go into any detail about how the toccatas of Bach continue to show this influence. In fact, when reviewing the current literature on the *stylus phantasticus* a discussion of this style specifically in Bach's toccatas is conspicuously absent. This lack of discussion may simply be due to the fact that not a great deal is known about Bach's early works, including the seven *manualiter*

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[125] Martin Geck, *Johann Sebastian Bach: Life and Work,* trans. John Hargraves (Orlando, Florida: Harcourt, Inc., 2000), 473, 528, 533, 556.
[126] David Schulenberg, *The Keyboard Music of J. S. Bach,* 2d ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 35.
[127] Christoph Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000), 97.

toccatas.[128] This chapter seeks, in part, to fill this lack of discussion. For this reason, we now turn to a discussion of how Bach's toccatas incorporate this style, focusing particularly on how Bach's toccatas mirror features of the *stylus phantasticus* works composed before him.

As it has been showed in the previous chapter, Bach's musical lineage included musicians who frequently composed in the *stylus phantasticus* idiom and specifically in the genre of the toccata. To quickly reiterate this influence, the *stylus phantasticus* toccatas of Merulo and Frescobaldi inspired Froberger, who in turn influenced the north German organ school (with a possible second route through Sweelinck in the Netherlands). Bach received the most important influences on his early compositional output from these north German organists, an influence that would last throughout his life.

While the early Italian and southern German composers had a great deal of influence on the style that the toccata would eventually embody, evidence of a direct link to Bach's own style is not to be found. As Jones writes, "while Bach may well have known the toccatas of Frescobaldi and Froberger, there are no obvious recollections of their music in his own toccatas, whereas the living tradition of the North-German school is audibly evident within them."[129] Who, then, provided the immediate compositional models for the *stylus phantasticus* in Bach's toccatas? As mentioned in chapter two there

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[128] "Possibly the largest grey area in the exploration of Bach's music is that of the composer's early work. " in Christoph Wolff, *Bach: Essays on His Life and Music* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 297.

[129] Richard D. P. Jones, *The Creative Development of Johann Sebastian Bach (Volume I:1695-1717): Music to Delight the Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 38-39.

are a few North-German organists who had a direct impact on Bach's early compositional output including Johann Adam Reincken (c.1643-1722), Dieterich Buxtehude (c.1637-1707).[130] These composers influenced Bach through personal meetings, student-teacher relationships or simply Bach's independent study of their musical output. Although these composers have been discussed briefly in chapter two, it is important to take a detailed examination of their works in the light of the *stylus phantasticus* definitions examined earlier in this chapter.

Christoph Wolff describes Johann Adam Reincken as "a major, perhaps even *the* major, figure in young Bach's life."[131] As briefly discussed in chapter two, Reincken was a pupil of Heinrich Scheidemann therefore providing a link between the Sweelinck-taught North German organ school and the later generation culminating in J. S. Bach. He was also acquainted with Froberger's work and therefore brings the *stylus phantasticus* influence emanating from Italy full circle. Between 1700 and 1702 Bach made at least two visits to Hamburg to hear Reincken play the organ in the Catharinenkirche. Although he probably did not meet the aging Reincken in person until later in the century (1720), the opportunity to hear the virtuosic playing of this organist was enough to inspire Bach's performance and composition early in his career.

At the meeting of Bach and Reincken in 1720, Bach was finally able to show his own skills to the now 97-year-old organist. What Reincken said to Bach after hearing him perform is highly intriguing for the present discussion of how Bach preserved the *stylus*

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[130] Wolff, *Bach: Essays,* 56.
[131] Ibid., 57.

phantasticus in his own works. According to Emanuel Bach's obituary of J. S. Bach, Reincken, after hearing Bach improvise on his own theme from *An Wasser Flüssen Babylon*, said: "I thought that this art was dead, but I see that it lives on in you."[132] Wolff remarks on the significance of this statement not only in reference to the art of improvisation that Bach was preserving but to the art of a previous generation in general: "Bach was—and not only from Reincken's perspective—the only organist of rank in his generation who not only preserved the traditions of the seventeenth century but developed them further."[133]

It is then important to examine in particular the works of Reincken that may have influenced the young J. S. Bach. There are only two existing toccatas by Reincken (one in G major and another in g minor), although he most likely composed much more than was published or has survived. Of these two toccatas the one in G major has more in common with the toccatas of J. S. Bach as it indeed foreshadows numerous features found in Bach's own works of the same genre. Length, structure, stylistic, and formal features all show a striking similarity to Bach's own keyboard toccatas.

Reincken's G major toccata is 153 measures; Bach's toccatas are between 142 (e minor, BWV 914) and 296 (d minor, BWV 913) measures. Before Reincken, toccatas rarely reached this length. Reincken's lengthy G major toccata is arranged in a five-part form that also foreshadows the organization of Bach's toccatas. A preludial opening section defined by imitative scalar patterns reaches a cadence twenty-three measures later

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[132] As quoted in Wolff, *Bach: Essays*, 58.
[133] Wolff, *Bach: Essays*, 58.

followed immediately by a fugue. Forty-three measures later, a very free and improvisational section lasting just ten measures separates this fugue from another preludial section consisting of a repetitive, sequenced, broken-chord figuration (21 measures). The fifth and final section is, predictably, a fugue. Plus or minus a section, this is the exact formal scheme that Bach's seven keyboard toccatas exhibit. One feature that Bach would not imitate is the placement of two free or preludial sections next to one another as Reincken does in the middle of this toccata. Bach, it could be argued, is more organized in his treatment of the form in that he, without fail, alternates free and imitative material in the toccatas.

Looking beyond the length and formal features that Reincken's G major toccata and Bach's seven keyboard toccatas have in common, it is important to note that Bach may have been following an earlier tradition in his choice of meter for the fugues of his toccatas. The two fugues found in Reincken's toccata seem to foreshadow choices of meter that Bach would make in the same genre. The first fugue is an understated example in 4/4 meter while the final fugue is a lively gigue-like section in 12/8 meter. Bach's toccatas also tend to follow this scheme; the intermediary fugues are normally in a duple meter while the final fugue is in compound meter (similarly to Reincken's G major toccata).[134] This shared feature shows how deeply rooted in tradition Bach's toccatas were.

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[134] These five triplet-based finale fugues are the ones from the f-sharp minor, BWV 910 (6/8 meter), D major, BWV 912 (6/16 meter), d-minor, BWV 913 (3/4 meter), g minor, BWV 915 (4/4 meter but in triplets), and G major, BWV 916 (6/8 meter) toccatas.

Another similarity between Reincken and Bach is their use of a more improvisatory fugal structure. The fugal entrances often do not stray very far to other key areas and the emphasis is on the technical skill of the performer rather than on compositional complexity. Also, free, improvisatory interruptions within the fugal structure are found within both Reincken's and Bach's works. In the first fugue of Reincken's G major toccata, the strict counterpoint dissolves into broken figuration near the end of the fugue:

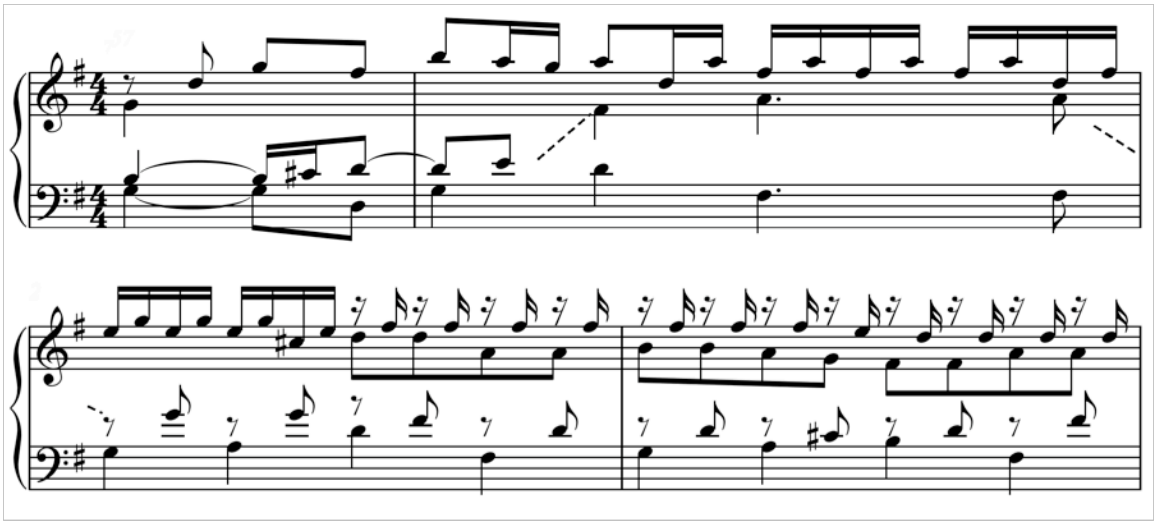

Fig. 3.1: J. A. Reincken, Toccata in G Major, mm. 57-60

This free material, which lasts for seven and a half measures before reaching a cadence, cannot be called a separate section of the five-part formal structure because the fugue does not reach a cadence until the conclusion of this free material. It is better described as a free, improvisatory conclusion of the fugue. Similarly, the final fugue of Reincken's G major toccata features a brilliant free-style ending lasting fourteen

measures (mm.140-154). Once again, this section cannot be defined as a separate improvisatory section (thus causing an imbalance in the alternating sectional structure) due to the lack of a full authentic cadence in the fugue until the free material has concluded.

Bach uses a similarly dramatic device in many of the fugues in his toccatas.[135] Particularly notable is the brilliant ending of the D major toccata:

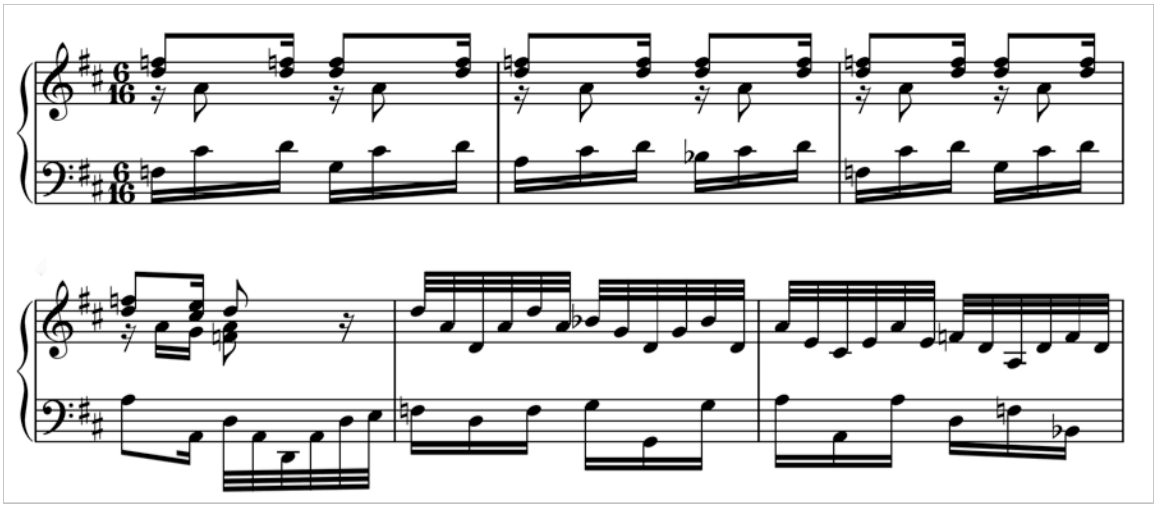

Fig. 3.2: J. S. Bach, Toccata in D Major, BWV 912, mm. 261-266

Just as in Reincken's fugues, the full authentic cadence is only reached at the conclusion of this free material, connecting it to the fugal material that preceded the improvisatory section.

[135] This feature is found in the following toccatas: f-sharp minor, BWV 910 (mm. 188-199), c minor, BWV 911 (mm. 80-85 and 171-175), D major, BWV 912 (mm. 261-277), d minor, BWV 913 (mm. 110-120 and 288-296), e minor, BWV 914 (mm. 128-142), g minor, BWV 915 (mm. 187-194). The G major toccata, BWV 916, shows dramatic gestures that are too short to be included here.

Before and after the fugal sections of Reincken's G major toccata there is great variety of free/improvisatory material, each non-contrapuntal section exhibiting a different compositional aesthetic. Reincken's toccata begins (mm. 1-23) with typical preludial material of the north German Baroque; imitative figuration spins out across the range of the instrument with a pedal point in the left hand:

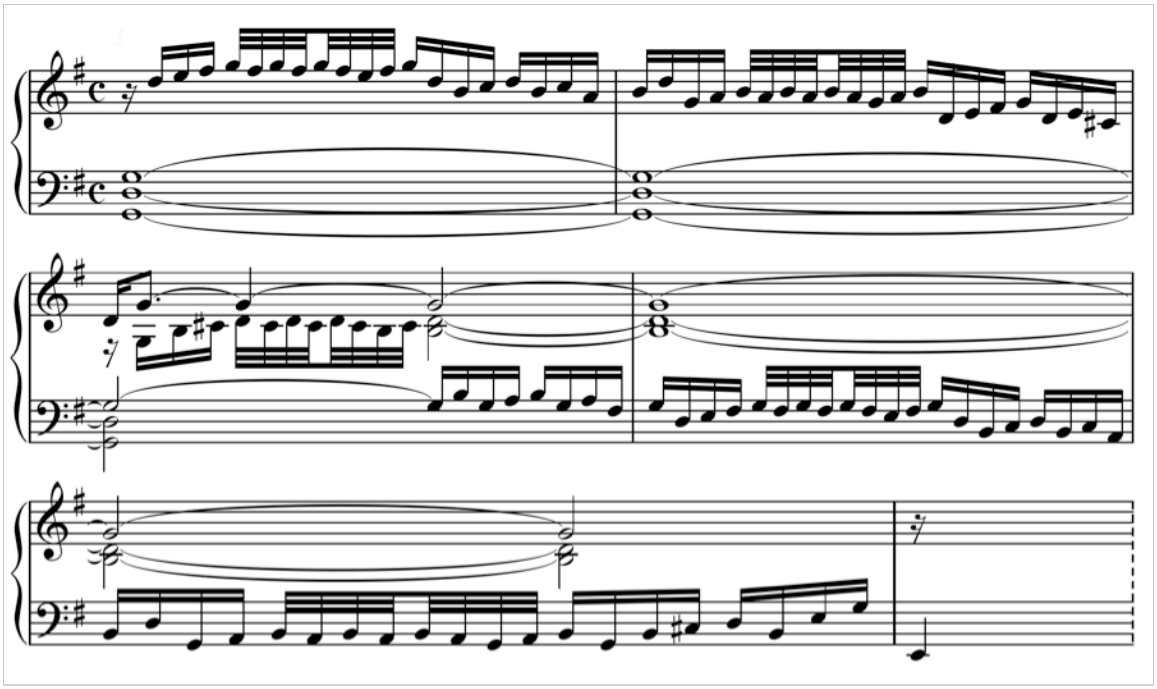

Fig. 3.3: J. A. Reincken, Toccata in G Major, mm. 1-6

The second non-fugal section (mm. 67-76) of Reincken's toccata could be best characterized as a recitative:

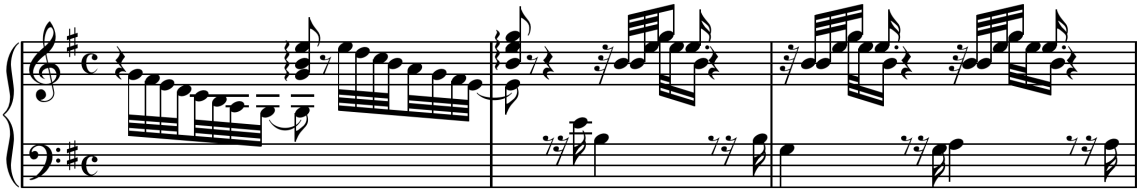

Fig. 3.4: J. A. Reincken, Toccata in G major, mm. 67-69

The rhetorical motives, dramatic pauses, and fragmented material point to this vocal inspiration. Bach also uses this style of writing frequently in the seven keyboard toccatas, including the ones in D major, BWV 912 (mm. 68-79 and 111-126), and e minor, BWV 914 (mm. 42-70). Here is an example from Bach's D major Toccata:

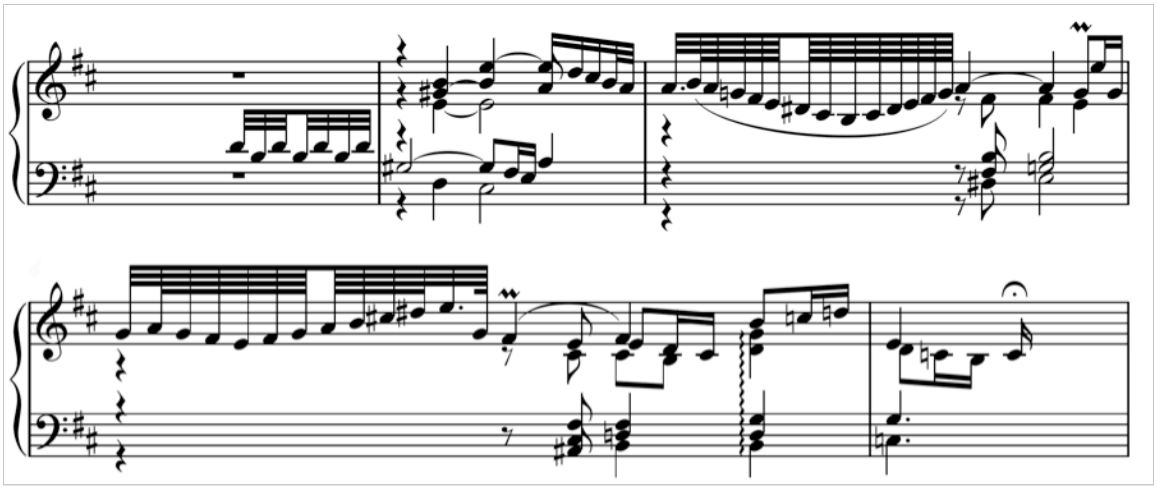

Fig. 3.5: J. S. Bach, Toccata in D major, BWV 912, mm. 114-118

The final free section in Reincken's G major toccata (mm. 77-97) is once again preludial in that it has one motivic figure that is repetitively transposed through a lengthy harmonic progression (what Troeger calls, "pensive sequences"):[136]

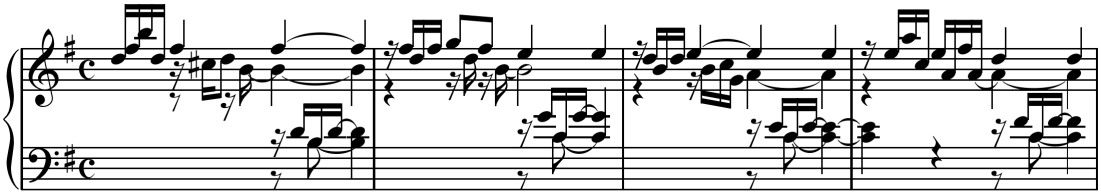

Fig. 3.6: J. A. Reincken, Toccata in G major, mm. 77-80

[136] Troeger, *Playing Bach,* 56

This compositional technique is much like that used in the prelude to Bach's Prelude and Fugue in C major from the *Well Tempered Clavier* book I and would also be used in Bach's toccatas, particularly in the f-sharp minor, BWV 910 (mm. 108-126), and d minor, BWV 913 (mm. 124-141) works. Here is an example from his d minor Toccata:

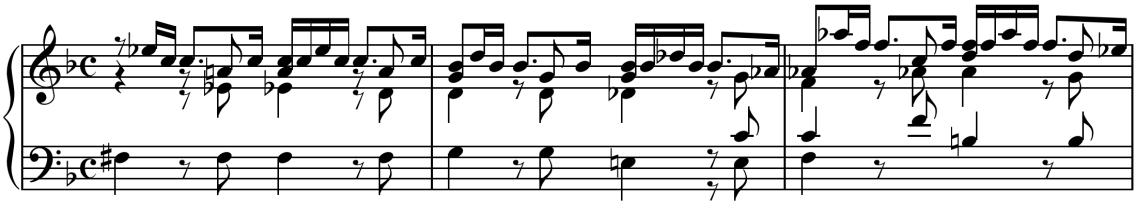

Fig. 3.7: J. S. Bach, Toccata in d minor, BWV 913, mm. 124-126

Troeger summarizes the variety and contrast found in Bach's toccatas in the following paragraph:

> As developed by Bach, the toccata includes several opposing styles; orchestrally styled movements (such as the second main section of the Toccata in F minor); and the *stylus phantasticus* itself, which embraces flourishes and brilliant passagework (such as the openings of the Toccatas in D Major and G minor), recitative-like writing, extravagant harmonic explorations, dramatic contrasts, freely voiced textures, and sometimes long and pensive sequences.[137]

Troeger implies that Bach "developed" the toccata into a multi-sectional, multi-stylistic work on his own. We have seen through the similar use of varied non-contrapuntal material in Reincken's toccatas that this design was not entirely original, although Bach did indeed push the boundaries that earlier composers had set. These "opposing styles" that Troeger mentions in reference to Bach then have a precedent.

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[137] Troeger, *Playing Bach,* 55-56.

From this comment, we can also see that Troeger identifies a number of compositional features of Bach's toccatas with the *stylus phantasticus*, not including, however, the fugue. This may be because there is a common misconception that the stylus phantasticus applies only to these sections that are improvisatory by nature. As we have seen from the examination of Kircher and Mattheson's definitions this is not necessarily true since both scholars include non-formal fugues in their definitions.

Dieterich Buxtehude, who was coincidentally a friend of Reincken, was another important part of Bach's early compositional influence. The Lübeck organist must have been well-known and therefore held in high regard by Bach; as mentioned in chapter two, Bach traveled on foot from Arnstadt to Lübeck in 1705, a distance of 240 miles, in order to hear this virtuosic organist perform his famous *Abendmusik* in the Marienkirche. Most, if not all, of Buxtehude's toccatas are for the organ as all but two (in existence) contain a pedal part. It was certainly the organ playing of Buxtehude that influenced Bach; due to stylistic similarities it is evident that this organ influence transferred over to Bach's keyboard (*manualiter*) works as well. Geck remarks on the way Buxtehude's output influenced Bach:

> Bach seems to have responded to Buxtehude's big organ works, the multi-section *praeludia*, much as younger Italian violin composers responded to their predecessor's work: by developing the short sections characteristic of seventeenth-century instrumental music towards the longer, self-contained, full-fledged movements of the standard sonata as it was established by 1700 and beyond.[138]

[138] Geck, *Johann Sebastian Bach,* 50.

Although not directly referring to the toccata, Geck's observation certainly carries over to this genre as well; this process of expansion within each section of a toccata is exactly what we see when comparing the toccatas of Buxtehude and other seventeenth-century toccata-writers to the toccatas of Bach.

Of the two keyboard (manualiter) toccatas by Buxtehude that are extant, BuxWV 165 in G major is more comparable in length, but BuxWV 164 also in G major is more comparable in compositional style. Perhaps a better example when comparing Buxtehude's output with Bach's toccatas than either of these two keyboard toccatas is the Praeludium in G minor, BuxWV 163. Buxtehude's preludes are often indistinguishable from toccatas of the same era as they share many similar attributes. Snyder's description of Buxtehude's praeludia could very well be that of a Bach toccata:

> The essence of Buxtehude's praeludia lies in the juxtaposition of sections in a free, improvisatory, and idiomatic keyboard style with sections in a structured fugal style. […] They may contain one, two or three fugues, using a wide variety of styles and contrapuntal devices—or lack of them. The free sections, which invariably open them and which normally appear later in the piece, are composed in a dazzling array of textures and styles, from lengthy pedal points to fleeting sixteenth- and even thirty-second-note scales and arpeggios, from pure chordal homophony through various stages of its decoration to imitative counterpoint and fugato subsections, from tonal stability to daring harmonic excursions.[139]

We can see then how Bach may have been inspired—both structurally and compositionally—by Buxtehude's praeludia when writing the seven keyboard toccatas since they share every one of these characteristics. Further, Mattheson, in *Der*

[139] Snyder, *Dieterich Buxtehude,* 239.

vollkommene Capellmeister, even confused a praeludium of Buxtehude for a toccata by Froberger.[140]

The Praeludium BuxWV 163 is comparable to Bach's keyboard toccatas first because it does not contain a pedal part but it also because it foreshadows both the length and compositional style of Bach's own toccatas. At 154 measures this praeludium reaches almost the same length as Reincken's toccata discussed earlier. It encompasses six main sections. Opening with a free, improvisatory introduction, this praeludium introduces the first fugue in measure ten. A free section follows this fugue in measure 33 that is itself followed by a second fugue in measure 44. In measure 86 a lengthy improvisatory section links to the final fugue, which begins in measure 112. The entire work ends with a short, eight-measure section that contains figuration and scalar passages, much as in Bach's toccatas. Not only the variety and pacing of material is similar to Bach's toccatas, but also the use of fugues that have both duple and compound meters, similar to Reincken's toccata discussed earlier. Buxtehude's praeludium also begins and ends with a compound meter fugue comparable to Bach's toccata in D major, BWV 912.

Buxtehude's fugues in this work also seem to mirror an improvisatory tradition rather than exhibiting a rigidly planned structure. One feature of this aspect is that they contain brief improvisatory interruptions, much like those found in Bach's Toccata in f-sharp minor, BWV 910 (i.e. mm. 169-170). Here is an example from Buxtehude's

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[140] Snyder, *Dieterich Buxtehude,* 248.

Praeludium BuxWV 163 compared with Bach's f-sharp minor toccata:

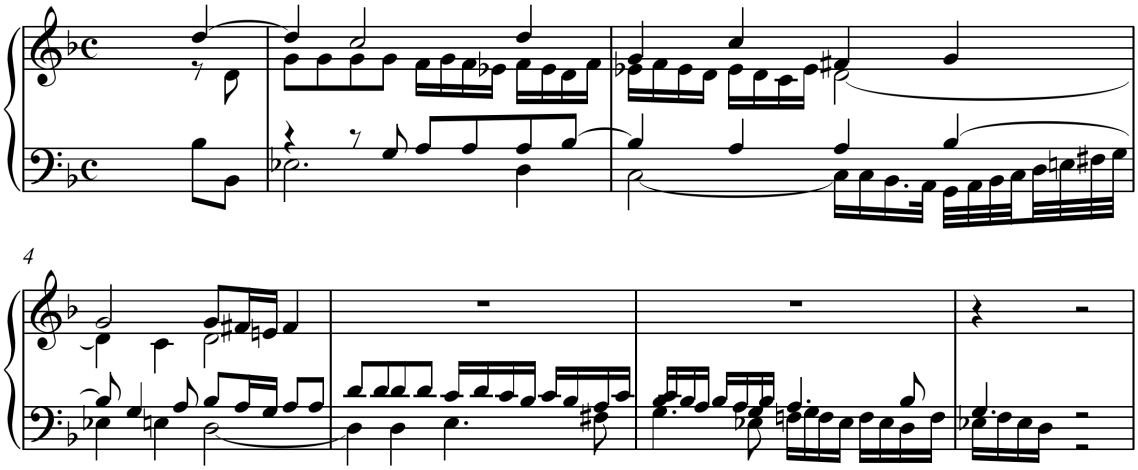

Fig. 3.8: Buxtehude, Praeludium BuxWV 163, mm. 59-65

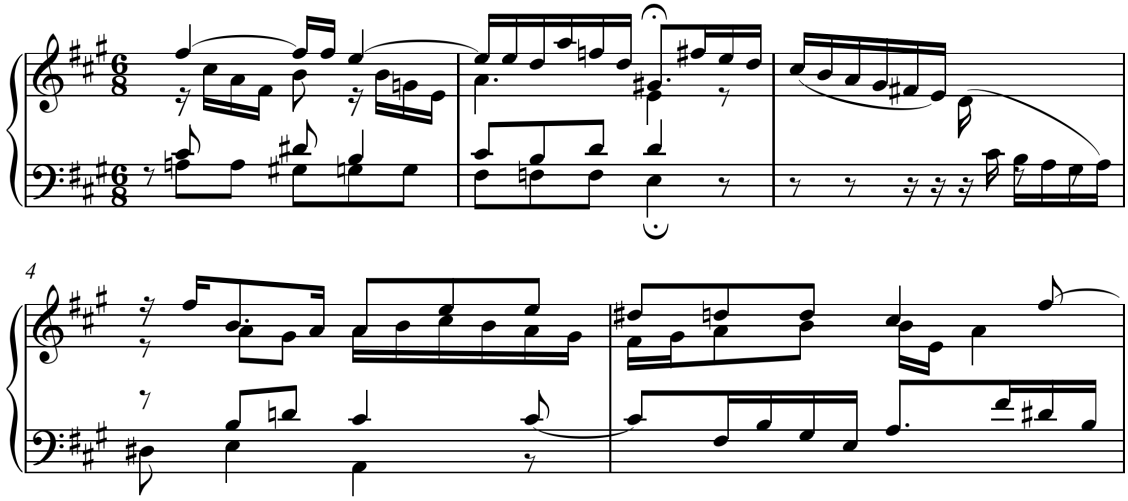

Fig. 3.9: J. S. Bach, Toccata in f-sharp minor, BWV 910, mm. 168-172

In both of the examples above, the fugal material is briefly interrupted by a departure from strict part-writing. A short scalar flourish marks this departure, followed by a return to the fugal subject just a measure or two later.

The free sections in Buxtehude's praeludium also bear much similarity to Bach's free material with their lengthy runs, bursts of thirty-second notes, tremolos, arpeggiations, falling tri-tone motives, and broken-chord figurations:

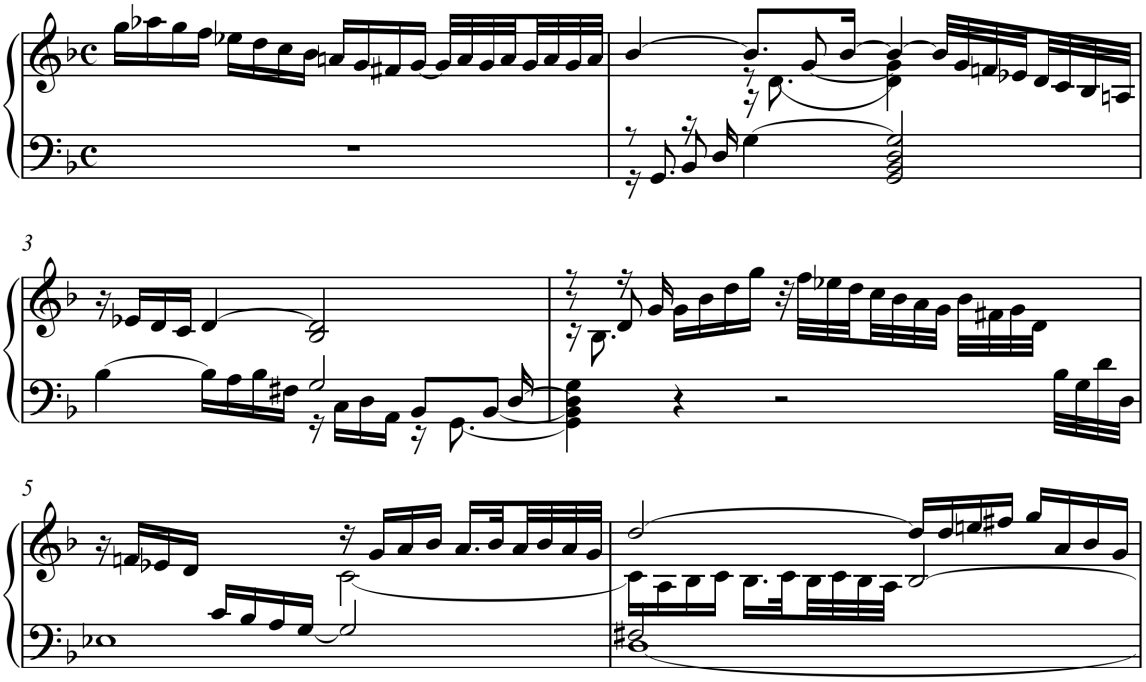

Fig. 3.10: Buxtehude, Praeludium BuxWV 163, mm. 1-6

Therefore, the features of style found in Buxtehude's and Reincken's *stylus phantasticus* works—a sectional structure that encompasses brilliant improvisational material, instrumental recitative, sequence, changing meters, and lengthy fugues inspired by improvisation—had a great impact on Bach's own works in this seventeenth-century style. While it would be wrong to imply that Bach was simply imitating the work of those that came before him, it is quite clear that there was a precedent for his own toccatas in the same style.

The composers just discussed, who had a great influence on Bach's early compositional output (and it is assumed on his performing/improvising style), were acquaintances that Bach made within the decade he was composing the seven keyboard toccatas. Upon noting this, it is safe to assume that it was the immediate influence of these composers that impressed upon Bach the dramatic potential found in the *stylus phantasticus* and resulted in his large output in this style during the first decade of the eighteenth century. These organists had something in common, which most likely drew Bach to them: their technical virtuosity was unparalleled in their times. Bach, who was at this time in his life pursuing a performing career, would naturally have been eager to explore genres that showcased his own virtuosity as well. As Jones writes: "The adoption of this style [the *stylus phantasticus*] must have been intimately associated with Bach's arrival at genuine virtuosity as a keyboard player, and with the desire to compose music that would act as an appropriate vehicle for it."[141]

Also discussed has been the concept of compositional style in the Baroque. A hypersensitivity to performance function, purpose, and instrumentation results in a highly structured way of thinking about musical types in this period. The *stylus phantasticus*, being one of nine style sub-classifications offered by Kircher, can be unequivocally linked to the genre of the toccata since it is mentioned as exemplary of this style throughout literature both past and present. It is hoped that this chapter has uncovered some of the meaning behind this term so that the performer may apply this knowledge to a more convincing interpretation of the toccatas of J. S. Bach.

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[141] Jones, *Creative Development,* 38.

Chapter 4. Towards a Historically Informed Performance of the Toccatas

Why do musicians in our time consider the study of historically informed performance to be so important for musical interpretation? The driving force behind this movement is most likely what Robert Donington describes when he says, "…music of whatever generation will sound more effective and more moving when we make every reasonable attempt to present it under its original conditions of performance."[142] There is no sincere musician in the field who would not want to achieve a "more effective" or "more moving" performance, and therein lies the allure of historically informed performance.

In the pursuit of a historically informed performance there are incredible discoveries to be made through the treatises and instruction manuals of writers who were alive during the time of some of our most celebrated Baroque composers; however, there are also some pitfalls. The author David Fuller says performers "are encouraged by manuals and ornament tables…which set forth rules of seemingly universal applicability into which the score need only be plugged to set their music aglow with authenticity."[143] The temptation is then to rely too heavily on "rules" rather than one's own common sense and judgment. Indeed, one writer of a historical treatise that will be examined below, Carl

[142] Robert Donington, *The Interpretation of Early Music* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), 87.
[143] David Fuller, "The Performer as Composer," in *Performance Practice*, 1st American Edition, ed. Howard Mayer Brown and Stanley Sadie (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), 117.

Philip Emanuel Bach cautioned against this approach when he said, "Play from the soul, not like a trained bird!"[144]

How must the performer avoid these traps in historically informed performance? Donington says that the musician should try to find an interpretation that *any* good performer contemporary with a certain composer would have done, of which there must necessarily have been many variations in performance even then.[145] When a performer combines their knowledge of the historical sources with an equal measure of their own good taste and sensibility, this is when a historically informed performance becomes something more than just a stale reading of a dusty score.

The preceding chapters were dedicated to uncovering the historical traditions that Bach used in the seven keyboard toccatas, BWV 910-916. We have seen through the exploration of Bach's predecessors that Bach owes a great debt to the toccatas that were composed before his time. The toccata did develop through time, yet important features such as the sectional structure and the use of a dramatic seventeenth-century style of composing called the *stylus phantasticus* remained even to the toccatas of J. S. Bach. Our knowledge of how much Bach depended upon his predecessors will act as a springboard to a discussion of what constitutes a historically informed performance of the seven keyboard toccatas, and, specifically, how one is to interpret the dramatic *stylus phantasticus* writing found in these works.

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[144] Carl Phillip Emanuel Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments,* trans. and ed. William J. Mitchell (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1949), 150.
[145] Donington, *Interpretation*, 89.

To this aim, this chapter will explore four main sources in chronological order. First Girolamo Frescobaldi's preface to his first book of toccatas (1615), will be discussed.[146] Next, the interpretational directions included in the definitions of the *stylus phantasticus* found in Matthesson's *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739), with some information from a few other definitions of this same style will be consulted. Third Johann Joachim Quantz's treatise *On Playing the Flute* (1752) and Carl Phillip Emanuel Bach's *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments* (1753) will be explored. This chapter will end with a discussion of more recent studies on interpretation including Robert Donington's *The Interpretation of Early Music,* Frederick Neumann's *Performance Practices of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,* and Richard Troeger's *Playing Bach on the Keyboard: A Practical Guide.*[147] Through the study of these sources, a clearer picture of how to interpret the dramatic, seventeenth-century style found in Bach's seven keyboard toccatas will emerge.

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[146] Girolamo Frescobaldi, Preface to *Toccate d'intavolatura di cimbalo et organo, libro primo, Roma 1637* (Firenze: Studio per edizioni scelte, 1978), translated in Christopher Stembridge, "Interpreting Frescobaldi. The Notation in the Printed Sources of Frescobaldi's Keyboard Music and its Implications for the Performer," *The Organ Yearbook: A Journal for the Players & Historians of Keyboard Instruments* 34 (2005): 52-56.

[147] Athanasius Kircher, *Musurgia Universalis* **(**New York: G. Olms, 1970); Johann Mattheson, *Der Vollkommene Capellmeister, 1739*, ed. Margarete Reimann (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1954); Sébastien de Brossard, *Dictionnaire de Musique: Paris 1703*. trans. and ed. Albion Gruber (Henryville, Pa.: Institute of Mediaeval Music, 1982); Bach, *Essay;* Johann Joachim Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, 2nd ed., trans. Edward R. Reilly (New York: Schirmer Books, 1985); Donington, *Interpretation*; Frederick Neumann, *Performance Practices of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1993); Richard Troeger, *Playing Bach on the Keyboard: A Practical Guide* (Cambridge, England: Amadeus Press, 2003).

Frescobaldi's Preface

One of the most important sources on interpretation in the genre of the toccata is Girolamo Frescobaldi's preface to his first book of toccatas, *Toccate d'intavolatura di cimbalo et organo, libro primo,* published in Rome in 1637.[148] There were two editions made of this first book of toccatas and therefore two prefaces published. The second edition contains a far more lengthy discussion but a couple of points will also be discussed from the first edition. In addition, the preface to Frescobaldi's *Fiori Musicali* (1635) includes some applicable material to toccata interpretation which will be cited below. Frescobaldi's instructions in these prefaces provide much insight into the type of expression that he favored in performances of his works and, due to Frescobaldi's influence on the rest of Europe, provide guidance for works beyond Frescobaldi's native Italy as well.

While much of what Frescobaldi writes is highly specific to the style of writing found in his own toccatas, there are a few points that speak to the performance of the dramatic, seventeenth-century style of writing found in toccatas in decades to come. The most often-cited paragraph from the preface to the second edition of the toccatas is the following:

> First of all, this style of playing must not be governed by a [regular] beat but resembles the performance-style of modern madrigals which, however difficult, are easily managed by making the beat sometimes quite slow and sometimes fast, and occasionally even suspending it as it were in mid-air, according to the affetti or sense of the words.[149]

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[148] Frescobaldi, Preface to *Toccate d'intavolatura,* 52-56.
[149] Ibid., 53.

This comment is perhaps the most famous among Frescobaldi's instructions because it gives a very clear impression of a toccata's character through the example of a madrigal. The expression found in a madrigal is so extreme that when applied to the toccata this gives more than enough explanation about how Frescobaldi preferred to play toccatas. From this example several facets of performance style are implied or even explained by Frescobaldi. First, the beat is highly flexible; this aids in the performer's execution (as Frescobaldi points out), but it also gives the work a certain character of freedom. It also creates a highly individualized expression that varies from performance to performance or from performer to performer.

The other point that Frescobaldi mentions in this paragraph in connection with playing a toccata like a madrigal is the fact that the words of a madrigal should be heeded when deciding when to push or pull the tempo or even to suspend the motion of the rhythm. A toccata, being an instrumental genre, does not have the advantage of words to aid in interpretation; however, the melodic gestures are often enough to show the performer what the emotional intent of the composer was. The recurring theme in this paragraph, based on the premise of madrigal performance, is that the toccata should have a highly free rhythmic approach based on the emotional character of each motive or section of the musical structure.

Later in this same preface Frescobaldi gives a few more specific instructions on exactly when and where to vary the tempo. He writes:

> For variations that have passaggi and affetti it is good to choose a broad tempo, and the same also applies to the toccatas. Those others without passaggi can be played to a fairly fast beat. Regulating the tempo is left to the good taste and fine

> judgment of the player; for this is fundamental to the spirit and excellence of this manner and style of playing.[150]

When Frescobaldi makes reference to passagi and affetti he is referring to the sections of his toccatas where there is sixteenth-note or faster rhythmic motion. Part of these instructions, to play these more difficult sections slowly, is designed to aid the performer technically since Frescobaldi advocates a clear, articulated playing style. Yet these instructions show an important aspect of the performing style from the seventeenth century; fast rhythmic motion is to be played slowly while slow rhythmic motion is to be played quickly.

From the first edition of the first book of toccatas comes another clarification on how the performer should determine the tempo of a particular passage in the toccata's structure. Frescobaldi writes the following:

> The beginnings of the Toccatas should be played adagio and the chords arpeggiated. **As you continue, pay attention to distinguishing between the various passi, taking them at greater or less speed according to their differing effects (*effetti*), which should become clear as they are played.** Similarly, *passi doppi* [semiquaver passages in both hands] should be played *adagio* so that they can be more clearly articulated, and when a downward leap occurs, the note immediately preceding it should always be played resolutely and fast.[151]

While the comments on beginning a toccata adagio/arpeggiated and the instruction on playing a downward leap may not be directly applicable to Bach's toccatas, the comment on how to determine the speed of sixteenth-note passages (in bold) should be heeded. Frescobaldi remarks that the effect of the passage should determine the speed

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[150] Frescobaldi, Preface to *Toccate d'intavolatura,* 54.
[151] Ibid., 52 (emphasis added).

of execution. In this way, he goes beyond the confines of technical execution to include an examination of the expressive character of the gesture. This instruction could be applied to the openings of J. S. Bach's f-sharp minor, D major, and c minor toccatas where brilliant scalar passages dominate the musical texture.

A final remark I would like to highlight from Frescobaldi's prefaces comes from the *Fiori Musicali* (1635). Frescobaldi comments on the performance of the toccatas in this volume when he says the following:

> In the Toccatas [when] trills or expressive (*affettuosi*) *passi* are found they should be played *adagio* and when quavers occur together in different voices play them somewhat *allegro* but more *adagio* when there are trills, slowing down the beat, **although the toccatas should be performed freely according to the player's taste.**[152]

The first points that he makes repeat his ideas from the prefaces to the first and second editions of the first book of toccatas. The last part of this paragraph, however, brings up an additional and highly intriguing point. In this sentence (in bold), Frescobaldi defines the word "freely" as "according to the player's taste." Since much of the source material examined in this treatise focuses on the "free" character of composition and performance in the toccatas, Frescobaldi's perspective on this point is highly valuable; rather than a mechanical, slavish rendering of the rhythms, Frescobaldi seems to be advocating a performance that allows the performer liberty to interpret as he or she chooses.

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[152] Girolamo Frescobaldi, Preface to *Fiori Musicali (1635)*, translated in Christopher Stembridge, "Interpreting Frescobaldi. The Notation in the Printed Sources of Frescobaldi's Keyboard Music and its Implications for the Performer," *The Organ Yearbook: A Journal for the Players & Historians of Keyboard Instruments* 34 (2005): 55 (emphasis added).

Stylus Phantasticus Definitions

Since the toccata, historically, exhibits the seventeenth-century style of composing defined by the term *stylus phantasticus*, some clues about interpretation can be found in the definitions of this style as well. The definition that contains the most instruction on performative aspects of the *stylus phantasticus* is that by Mattheson in *Der vollkommene Kapellmeister* (1739). Although his definition may not accurately describe Bach's works due to his exclusion of the fugue, his remarks on interpreting certain aspects of the *stylus phantasticus* are instructive. However, remarks by other definers of this style will be consulted as well—particularly on the aspect of freedom.

Every source that I consulted on the subject of the *stylus phantasticus* mentions that freedom is an integral part of this style. Kircher says the *stylus phantasticus* is "the most free and unrestrained method of composing; it is bound to nothing, neither to words nor to a melodic subject."[153] Brossard describes it as "a way of composing that is free and without constraint,"[154] and Mattheson says, "this style is the freest and least restricted style."[155] Walther continues to uphold this view as he says, "it is quite a free

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[153] Athanasius Kircher's definition translated by Kerala Snyder in *Dieterich Buxtehude: Organist in Lübeck,* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1987), 251-252.
[154] Brossard, *Dictionnaire de musique,* 117-118.
[155] Ernest C. Harriss, *Johann Mattheson's Der vollkommene Capellmeister: A Revised Translation with Critical Commentary* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981), 217.

type of composition that is exempt from all constraints,"[156] and Jankova says that it is, "a very free and very unbridled method of composition."[157]

While these descriptions of freedom included in these theorists' definitions seem to point more towards composition, freedom necessarily extends into the realm of performance as well. The performer will react to the free, unrestrained nature of the music just as he would react (oppositely) to the rigid formal and metrical structure of a fugue. Mattheson hints at this in his definition when he mentions that the *stylus phantasticus* "is the freest and least restricted style which one can devise for composing, *singing*, and *playing*."[158] By including the performative aspects of singing and playing in the same breath with composing, Mattheson points forward to the implications that the compositional technique of the *stylus phantasticus* has for performance.

Mattheson makes a number of additional references to freedom that aid in clarifying the meaning of this aspect of the *stylus phantasticus*. One way in which freedom of interpretation can be achieved is through rhythmic freedom. Mattheson explains that the musical motives of the style occur "without close observations of the beat and pitch, though these do occur on paper," and that the music can be performed "sometimes fast sometimes slow […] and also sometimes a little behind the beat; without

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[156] Johann Gottfried Walther, *Musikaliches Lexicon, oder musikaliche Bibliothek, 1732,* ed. Richard Schaal (Kassel and Basel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 1953) 584, trans. in Paul Collins, *The Stylus Phantasticus and Free Keyboard Music of the North German Baroque* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2005), 70.
[157] Tomáš Baltazar Janovka, *Clavis ad thesaurum magnae artis musicae* (Prague: Georg Labaun, 1701; repr. Amsterdam: F. Knuf, 1973), trans. in Collins, *The Stylus Phantasticus,* 53-54.
[158] Harriss, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister,* 217 (emphasis added).

meter."[159] While this rhythmically free approach would certainly not work in the strict fugal sections of Bach's toccatas it could certainly apply to the more improvisatory passages, such as the opening sections where a variety of rhythmic divisions are found in quick succession.

Besides the issue of tempo flexibility, Mattheson's reference to a non-exact observation of pitch is a puzzling one. One possibility is that it may imply that the performer is free to elaborate or add embellishments to what is written—a link to the thriving atmosphere of improvisation in this period. Whether the addition of pitches would be in fermatas as C. P. E. Bach suggests in his treatise on keyboard playing, or the addition of notes in chords for dynamic effect, as I have been instructed to do in my harpsichord studies, is not fully explained by Mattheson's words here.[160] However, when considering the performance traditions of early toccatas written in the *stylus phantasticus*, the meaning of this may become clearer. In Victor Coelho's article, "Frescobaldi and the Lute and Chitarrone Toccatas of 'Il Tedesco della Tiorba'," the author points out that early composers of the toccata, including Frescobaldi, instructed the performer to add embellishment or to re-strike chords when there are suspensions. The very nature of the compositional style furthers this. Coelho explains: "Kapsberger, like Frescobaldi,

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[159] Harriss, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister,* 217.
[160] In "affettuoso movements [the fermata] must be embellished if only to avoid artlessness." Bach, *Essay,* 143.

promotes the element of improvisation by leaving space within each bar for the player to embellish or restrike the chord."[161]

One example of where one could add notes in J. S. Bach's toccatas is in the tremolos often found in the recitative-like sections. Badura-Skoda asserts that, in following Frescobaldi's directions the tremolos in measures 68-70 of the D major toccata should be accelerated and with more alternations than notated.[162] This seventeenth-century element of improvisation, embellishment, and inexact interpretation of the rhythm could well be what is alluded to in Matthesson's eighteenth-century definition of the *stylus phantasticus*.

A third aspect of freedom that Mattheson mentions in his definition of the *stylus phantasticus* is the overall improvisational feature of the style. The role of the composer in this era was not strictly one of composing; performing and composing were inextricably linked through the fact that written music often acted as a sketch that was to be filled in by the performer. Mattheson makes reference to this feature when he writes, "It [the *stylus phantasticus*] actually consists not so much in the writing or composing with the pen, as in the singing and playing that occurs spontaneously, or as is said *extempore*."[163] A current scholar, Robert Fuller, also discusses this aspect about the Baroque period with a fitting comparison: "A large part of the music of the whole era was

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[161] Victor Coelho, "Frescobaldi and the Lute and Chitarrone Toccatas of 'Il Tedesco della Tiorba,'" in *Frescobaldi Studies*, ed. Alexander Silbiger (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987), 146.
[162] Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard,* trans. Alfred Clayton (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 437.
[163] "Er bestehet eigentlich nicht sowol im Setzent oder Componiren mit der Feder, als in einem Singen und Spielen, das aus freiem Geiste, oder, wie man sagt, *ex tempore* geschiehet." Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister,* 87; Trans. in Harriss, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister,* 216.

sketched rather than fully realized, and the performer had something of the responsibility of a child with a colouring book, to turn these sketches into rounded art-works." [164] The performer, then, is well advised to perform this music with the mindset of an improviser, composing on the spot. In this way, the music will take on a more spontaneous nature that would have been an important characteristic of performance in this era.

One final aspect that Mattheson mentions in his definition of the *stylus phantasticus* is the element of virtuosity that is so important to the genres that are a part of this style, including the toccata. He writes that the freedom of composition found in this style is important "so that the singers' or players' skill can be revealed" and also that these works should be performed "not without a view to pleasing, to dazzling and to astonishing."[165] Thus, the main aim of all the features mentioned above, including freedom of tempo and improvisatory performance techniques, is to serve the ultimate goal of works written in the *stylus phantasticus*: virtuosic display by both the composer and performer.

C. P. E. Bach and J. J. Quantz

According to the definitions of the *stylus phantasticus*, this style of music is highly expressive. In an effort to understand how to bring out the expression in this music, we turn to the instruction found in C. P. E. Bach's *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments* (*Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen*) and J.

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[164] Fuller, "The Performer as Composer," 117.
[165] Harriss, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister,* 217.

J. Quantz's treatise *On Playing the Flute* (*Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen*).

While both these works were written immediately following Bach's death, their instruction is applicable to the elder Bach's works due to the fact that these musicians were heavily influenced by the Leipzig master. As C. P. E. Bach said himself: "In composition and keyboard playing I never had any other teacher than my father."[166] Julian Hellaby, in her book, *Reading Musical Interpretation: Case Studies in Solo Piano Performance*, remarks that Bach's treatise is often used to elucidate the performance of music before its own time particularly in its discussions on embellishment, articulation, and the execution of the free fantasy genre.[167]

On the opposite side of this argument, however, Anthony Newman claims that C. P. E. Bach is "not a necessarily reliable source for our purposes," since C. P. E. Bach wrote in a different style from his father.[168] This does not completely compromise the validity of this manuscript for the interpretation of J. S. Bach's music, however, due to the fact that C. P. E. Bach discusses both old and new musical styles in this treatise. One must be careful, then, to observe when C. P. E. Bach is giving instruction on the older or newer style of composition and apply the information accordingly.

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[166] As quoted in: William S. Newman, "Emanuel Bach's Autobiography," *The Musical Quarterly* 51, 2 (April, 1965): 366; http://www.jstor.org/stable/741276 (accessed June 5, 2012).
[167] Julian Hellaby, *Reading Musical Interpretation: Case Studies in Solo Piano Performance* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 64.
[168] Anthony Newman, *Bach and the Baroque: A Performing Guide to Baroque Music with Special Emphasis on the Music of J. S. Bach* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1985), 9.

In the case of J. J. Quantz's treatise, the application to J. S. Bach's works is more universally accepted. Newman states that Quantz most likely knew Bach and his performances.[169] Although Quantz's treatise also discusses both the Baroque and the galant practices, much as C. P. E. Bach's work does, it seems that scholars tend to accept Quantz's validity to J. S. Bach interpretation more readily. This may be due to Quantz's more retrospective view on composition in general.

These views on the validity of C P. E. Bach and J. J. Quantz to J. S. Bach aside, there are two main areas that I would like to explore in these treatises that relate to the performance of works that exhibit the dramatic seventeenth-century style of writing found in the toccatas. Since the definers of this style often mention freedom of tempo and improvisation, I have selected the areas of these two treatises that give specific advice on these topics.

Of these two writers, C. P. E Bach has the most to say about the freedom of tempo in eighteenth-century performance practice. In a discussion of how to determine the particular expression that a work should convey, Bach explains that much expression comes from factors other than those found on the page. One of these unwritten expressive techniques, according to Bach, is freedom in timing. Bach says that "certain purposeful violations of the beat are often exceptionally beautiful." He broadens this aspect of inexact timing to include the tempo as a whole: "In solo performance and in ensembles made up of only a few understanding players, manipulations are permissible which affect

[169] Newman, *Bach and the Baroque,* 7.

the tempo itself."[170] Thus, Bach clearly gives the musician of his time the tool of rubato in order to create a high degree of expression.

Bach also gives a few more details when he describes performative aspects of the fantasia. As we have seen in chapter one, the fantasia is a genre very closely linked to the toccata and therefore embodies many of the same characteristics as the toccata, including the use of the seventeenth-century dramatic style of writing called the *stylus phantasticus*. Both fantasias and toccatas from this era often contain sections of instrumental recitative—the right hand performing what would be a vocal line while both hands provide intermittent chordal punctuation. Bach writes: "It is a distinct merit of the fantasia that, unhampered by such trappings, it can accomplish the aims of the *recitative* at the keyboard with complete, unmeasured freedom."[171]

This style of writing can be highly challenging for today's keyboardists to interpret, especially if they do not have any previous experience accompanying a vocal recitative. C. P. E. Bach gives some clues on how to perform this instrumental recitative when he says "much like in a *recitative*, tempo and meter must be frequently changed in order to rouse and still the rapidly alternating affects."[172] We can also see in Quantz' instructions to the performer on accompanying a true vocal *recitative*, that the words take precedence over the beat: "In an Italian *recitative* the singer does not always adhere to the

[170] Bach, *Essay,* 150.
[171] Ibid., 153
[172] Ibid.

tempo, and has the freedom to express what he is to execute quickly or slowly, as he considers best, and as the words require."[173]

Also helpful to today's performer of instrumental recitative is Quantz's likening of music to speech. Quantz writes that an orator must "…aim [sic] at a pleasing variety in voice and language; that he avoid [sic] monotony in the discourse, rather allowing the tone of the syllables and words to be heard now loudly, now softly, now quickly, now slowly; and that he must raise his voice in words requiring emphasis, subdue it in others."[174] Therefore, much like Frescobaldi's discussion linking toccatas to the dramatic vocal genre of the Italian madrigal, Quantz and C. P. E. Bach advocate a vocal approach to instrumental works. Today's performer, when deciding upon an interpretation of these recitative-like sections in the toccatas of Bach, may do well to think of these sections as vocal transcriptions and therefore perform them in a highly vocal style.

Both Frescobaldi and Mattheson, though separated by a century, mention the importance of an improvisatory approach in toccatas or works that are written in the dramatic seventeenth-century style: the *stylus phantasticus*. Performers of this style then need a basis upon which to interpret this style as well. C. P. E. Bach includes a very helpful and intriguing chapter devoted specifically to improvisation in his *Versuch*. I would like to mention a few points from this chapter that will be helpful when interpreting works written in an improvisational style, such as the toccatas of J. S. Bach. First, C. P. E. Bach mentions that the structure and character of an improvised prelude

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[173] Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, 292.
[174] Ibid., 119.

should be shaped by the piece that follows. [175] We have seen this in the discussion included in chapter one where early Venetian toccatas were shaped by the psalm tone mode of the following chant. J. S. Bach's toccatas, although they do not precede chants, contain opening sections that could be considered an improvised prelude to the fugal section that follows. Often the character of this opening section and the ensuing fugue are similar. To apply C. P. E. Bach's instructions, the performer should then use this preludial section to truly preface the fugue that follows, rather than highlighting any contrasts with the following fugue.

In his discussion on improvisation C. P. E. Bach also gives some advice to the performer on embellishments and arpeggiations within an improvised work. He writes the following: "All chords may be broken in many ways and expressed in rapid or slow figuration." Further, he points out that the chords should be always broken in different ways, such as using repetitions of some of the notes, adding "foreign" notes, *acciaccature*, scalar figures, and varying the motion (upward and downward arpeggiations).[176] Thus, if the performer of Bach's toccatas employs these techniques the effect will be one of a greater improvisational quality.

The advice that C. P. E. Bach and J. J. Quantz give on tempo and improvisation should certainly be taken into account by performers of the toccatas of J. S. Bach. C. P. E. Bach's informative discussion of the beauty that freedom of tempo adds to live performance echoes the remarks of the scholars who defined the *stylus phantasticus* in

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[175] Bach, *Essay,* 431.
[176] Ibid., 439.

the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Using the example of orators and vocal recitatives to interpret the instrumental recitatives found in J. S. Bach's toccatas is also helpful to the modern performer. Finally, the improvisational aspect of these toccatas will benefit from the few pieces of information provided by C. P. E. Bach's discussion of improvisational traditions in his era.

Current Scholarship

Scholars, composers, performers, and theorists have been debating how to interpret music for centuries; however, this discussion has yet to be exhausted. We turn now to some of the scholars of our time, including Paul Badura-Skoda, Richard Troeger, and David Schulenberg in a discussion of interpretation in Bach's toccatas. The most salient features of interpretation in the dramatic seventeenth-century style of composition, the *stylus phantasticus*—freedom of tempo or beat, and improvisational style—will be examined.

The exact manner in which performers used rhythmic freedom in the Baroque is about as difficult to understand in an era without recording capabilities as improvisation. In many ways, musical notation is extremely limited in portraying rhythm. As pointed out earlier, Mattheson said the *stylus phantasticus* should be played, "without close observations of the beat and pitch, though these do occur on paper."[177] A prominent scholar of our times, Paul Badura-Skoda, says, "To be sure, even Bach's notation cannot

[177] Mattheson, *Der Vollkommene Capellmeister*, 217.

wholly render the infinite subtleties which characterize great artistry in performance."[178] We can see, therefore, that scholars both past and present would agree that the music on the page is not accurate in portraying the full intentions of the composer. How then may the performer of today, who is so far removed from the time and tastes of the Baroque period, interpret the unwritten, free aspect of rhythm that the toccatas demand?

Today's scholars define several types of rhythmic alteration that are important for interpretation in Baroque music. Some of these are over-dotting, binary against ternary rhythms (three against four), and *notes inégales*.[179] Beyond these often-debated rhythmic problems in the Baroque period, there are even more radical approaches to varying the written rhythm. As Fuller states, "It is true that rhythmic liberties far beyond over-dotting and inequality were cultivated in certain Baroque styles. The few mentions doubtless only hint at the wider reality."[180] Some of these "rhythmic liberties" that Fuller is making reference to are the techniques associated with *tempo rubato*, the term 'con discrezione', and recitative. These three aspects of rhythmic freedom are the most directly applicable to the performance of the *stylus phantasticus* found in J. S. Bach's toccatas.

The term "rubato" is one that is most commonly associated with the romantic period and the music of Chopin in particular. This is why it is perhaps surprising at first to see the term used in reference to the works of J. S. Bach whose perpetual-motion fugal works are what he is most often associated with. Rubato in Bach, however, was even

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[178] Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach,* 66.
[179] Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell, *The Historical Performance of Music: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 64-67.
[180] Fuller, "The Performer as Composer," 130.

mentioned by the nineteenth-century composer Camille Saint Saëns: "I have learned the true secret of *Tempo Rubato*, already advocated by Mozart, necessary even with Sebastian Bach, indispensable in the music of Chopin."[181] Indeed, rhythmic freedom can be traced back as far as 1536 where performers were instructed to vary the tempo in chords, ornaments, diminutions, and runs in vihuela fantasias.[182] We can see, then, that explicit directions to vary the tempo on a microscopic level existed centuries before Chopin.

Ferguson defines two types of rubato: "melodic" and "structural" rubato respectively. In melodic rubato the accompaniment remains strict to the beat while the melody is free to deviate from the beat (much like the type of rubato prescribed in Chopin, for instance). Structural rubato is the type of rubato alluded to in Frescobaldi's preface to the first book of toccatas when he says to perform these works like a madrigal.[183] How exactly this type of rubato should be applied to J. S. Bach is not always a matter upon which scholars agree. Badura-Skoda says: "Frescobaldi's often-cited directions in the prefaces to the toccatas concerning rhythmically free performance are equally applicable to many works of his pupil Froberger. It is possible to demonstrate the latter's influence on German composers in general and on Buxtehude and Bach in particular. Yet in the case of Bach, even in his toccatas, some caution is advisable."[184]

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[181] Richard Hudson, *Stolen Time: The History of Tempo Rubato* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 195.
[182] Hudson, *Stolen Time*, 9.
[183] Howard Ferguson, *Keyboard Interpretation from the 14th to the 19th Century: An Introduction* (New York & London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 48; Frescobaldi, *Preface,* 53 (also see page four of the current chapter for a discussion of this directive by Frescobaldi).
[184] Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach,* 18.

Although Badura-Skoda does not explain why caution should be used here, he may have a good reason for this, considering the disparity of time and geographical influence between Frescobaldi and Bach and the lack of instructional sources to bridge the gap.

The second area of rhythmic alteration that is applicable to the *stylus phantasticus* is a rather curious term; *con discrezione*. Hudson explains that the use of this term, which literally means "with discretion," can be traced back to the middle of the seventeenth century where it is found in laments or *tombeaux*. This rhythmic freedom was captured visually by the French tradition of writing unmeasured preludes. The rhythmically free performance of preludes remained throughout the eighteenth century though the unmeasured notation was eventually discarded.[185]

This term, *con discrezione*, is important to the discussion of Bach's toccatas because it is used both by composers who had a great influence on Bach's toccatas and also by J. S. Bach himself. Bach reserves his use of this term for an improvisatory section in the D major toccata, BWV 912 (starting in measure 111). Whether or not this term can be assumed in similar locations in the other toccatas is up to debate; however there are many sections similar to the one that Bach assigns this expressive marking to in the other toccatas. David Schulenberg believes Bach may have started using this term due to a lack of understanding of the older performance practices by the younger generation of musicians which created a need for more explicit directions in the score.[186]

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[185] Hudson, Stolen Time, 10.
[186] David Schulenberg, "Versions of Bach: Performing Practices in the Keyboard Works," *Bach Perspectives* 4 (1999): 119.

Since Bach used this term in his toccata in D major, it is important to understand its meaning. Troeger says that *con discrezione* invokes a "vocal recitative" and that one should use "considerable freedom of timing, as is of course appropriate to recitative."[187] Similarly, Hellaby remarks that "*con discrezione* can be taken as an invitation to the performer to treat metre and notated rhythmic proportion in a very free manner, thus partially liberating him or her from the constraints of the score."[188] These two scholars highlight the freedom in pulse or timing that seems to be the core issue of this term. Indeed, to cite again the discussion of an early scholar, Mattheson says in *Der vollkommene Kapellmeister* "One is probably also in the habit of writing the words with such [*stylus phantasticus*] pieces: *ceci se joue a discretion*, or in Italian: *con discrezione*, in order to observe that one need not be restricted to the beat at all; but according to his pleasure, might sometimes play slowly, sometimes fast."[189] This comment, and the one by modern scholars show the meaning of this term for interpretation by today's performers; this term indicates a section of extraordinary freedom in timing.

The third manner of rhythmic alteration that is inherent in the performance of the instrumental *stylus phantasticus* is the type of freedom used in the performance of vocal recitative. Since toccatas are an instrumental genre it may not be entirely clear how the performance of a vocal genre would apply. Yet, as shown earlier in this chapter, some of the earliest writers discussing how to interpret the instrumental *stylus phantasticus* link this style to vocal recitative. In our age Richard Troeger confirms a connection between

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[187] Troeger, *Playing Bach,* 56-57.
[188] Hellaby, *Reading Musical Interpretation,* 68-69.
[189] Harriss, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister,* 219.

the *stylus phantasticus* and the style of a recitative when he says: "The *stylus phantasticus* was played with considerable freedom of timing, as is of course appropriate to *recitative*."[190]

When one considers the style and purpose of vocal recitative it will become clearer how this style is linked to the *stylus phantasticus*. The purpose of recitative is, of course, to convey a story line in a shorter amount of time than in an aria. In this effort there are many more words than in an aria and little to no repetitions of words. The dramatic character of these words are painted through the use of extremes of consonance and dissonance, contrasting small and large intervals, dramatic pauses, and sometimes elaborate accompaniments including violent runs and bombastic dotted rhythms. Since the features just discussed are also features found in the instrumental *stylus phantasticus*—excepting the use of words—it is clear how scholars both past and present consistently use *recitative* to explain the performance of the *stylus phantasticus*.

From these discussions it is clear that the vocalist has complete authority over the rhythmic flow of a recitative; however, the meaning of the words is what should instigate the rhythmic alteration. Accompanists of vocal recitative must always allow the singer these rhythmic liberties and also help to illustrate the words through a rendition of the figured bass that is simple yet sensitive to the meaning of the text. Harmonic choices in recitative always reflect the relative dramatic tension found in the words, giving the accompanist ample opportunity to help portray the textual meaning. In the instrumental

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[190] Troeger, *Playing Bach*, 56.

stylus phantasticus, it may be helpful to work through this process backwards, taking the harmonic and figurational evidence into account to understand what type of dramatic scheme the composer had in mind. Assigning words based upon the harmonic or figurational features of the text-less *stylus phantasticus* will help to ensure a compelling interpretation of these sections in every performance.

Badura-Skoda has an important note to add on this subject. When discussing the performance of recitative (whether vocal or instrumental) in Bach he says, "For the performer the most important task with regard to rhythm consists in recognizing the groupings of notes and beats in all their diversity, and making them intelligible to the listener by means of greater or lesser accentuation, tension and relaxation, breathing and articulation, and by combining and separating them." Badura-Skoda's comment speaks to the heart of the matter in that it places the responsibility of observing and interpreting every aspect of the score in the hands of the performer. The more each performer knows about the stylistic implications of the *stylus phantasticus*, the better they will understand Bach's intentions and be able to convey those intentions to the audience.

From the current discussion of rhythmic alteration the mistaken impression may arise that the performer has artistic liberty to bend the rhythm exactly as he chooses. This mindset may result in a performance that is less than satisfactory and even leave the audience with the impression of unsure technical execution. In order to avoid this mistake the performer should first learn the note values exactly as they are written on the page then use his or her artistic sensibility, including sensitivity to harmonic, intervallic, and affective implications in the score, to create a convincing interpretation. Ferguson

remarks: "No matter how extreme a rubato is used, the player must always take the greatest care never to lose sight of the basic structure of the music."[191] Just as it is impossible to add a decorative scroll to a building until the structure has been put in place, it is impossible to add expressive rhythmic alterations until the structure of the music has been established.

Besides the three areas of rhythmic alteration just discussed, the issue of an improvisatory approach to the toccatas is also one that is important for today's performer of Bach's keyboard toccatas. The toccatas reflect a tradition of improvisation that was an integral part of any Baroque keyboardists skill set during the Baroque period. Toccatas, in general, are often described as having their roots in improvisation. Bach's toccatas are not immune to this theory; Schulenberg writes: "these toccatas [BWV 910-916] bear a family resemblance to the praeludium and other quasi-improvisational genres cultivated by German organists during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.[192] Most scholars mention the free sections when describing improvisational characteristics, yet Troeger even goes as far as to suggest that the *fugues* found in Bach's toccatas are "reflective of actual improvisations" due to their form which digresses from the practices of a more academically conceived fugue.[193]

Thus, performers of Bach's toccatas today may find it helpful to enter into the mindset of an improvising musician testing the capabilities of the keyboard while warming up his fingers and giving a display of virtuosity in the toccatas. Much of this

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[191] Ferguson, *Keyboard Interpretation,* 49.
[192] David Schulenberg, *The Keyboard Music of J. S. Bach,* 2d ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006) 98.
[193] Troeger, *Playing Bach*, 59.

sense of improvisation comes from the just concluded discussion on rhythmic freedom above. However, Ferguson has the following advice to offer the modern performer:

> When either a prelude or a toccata shows traces of its improvisatory origin, this should be reflected in performance. The precise degree of freedom needed depends on the musical content. Passages and sections that lack a clearly defined theme, or consist mainly of brilliant flourishes, should be wayward in rhythm; whereas those that are built on definite themes will tend to establish a tempo and keep to it for as long as the theme persists. In the freer sections the effect should be that of the player tentatively feeling his way towards some more positive thematic idea, or of displaying his manual dexterity; and the stricter sections, that he is exploring the beauties and possibilities of the particular idea or ideas that he has discovered.[194]

This description captures the essence of interpretational issues in the toccatas with its focus on rhythmic freedom or lack thereof, and the improvisational attitude of the performer. Of course, the mindset of an improviser will come more naturally to performers if improvisation is a part of their musical training, but it is not unattainable by those who are not formally trained in this practice. The advice we have studied that was offered by the many scholars, both historical and modern, will, in combination with the imagination and good taste of the performer, lead to a convincing interpretation of the keyboard toccatas of J. S. Bach.

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[194] Ferguson, *Keyboard Interpretation,* 49.

Chapter 5. A Twenty-First-Century Perspective on Performance of J. S. Bach's Toccatas

The seven keyboard toccatas, BWV 910-916, of J. S. Bach have, since the turn of the twenty-first century, begun to attract more attention from recording artists. Most likely contributing to the lack of interest in recording them before the turn of the century was a prevailing opinion that these works do not fit into Bach's main oeuvre due to their relatively early compositional dates. Christoph Wolff wrote in 1990 that the works written after 1720 (eliminating the toccatas) "constitute a stable central repertoire […] that apparently rendered much of the earlier and largely miscellaneous keyboard output obsolete for purposes of teaching and performing."[195] Indeed, even in Wolff's celebrated biography of Bach, *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician* (2000), the seven keyboard toccatas do not receive any discussion from this highly respected scholar.[196]

Directly conflicting with Wolff's view is the remark of a respected German scholar, Martin Geck in *Johann Sebastian Bach: Life and Work* (2000): "That Bach often employed his early toccatas for teaching, even in later years, indicates that despite their stylistic heterogeneity and occasional excesses, for him they were models of their

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[195] Christoph Wolff, "On Bach's Early Harpsichord Works," in *The Harpsichord and its Repertoire. Proceedings of the International Harpsichord Symposium Utrecht 1990.* ed. Pieter Dirksen (Utrecht: STIMU Foundation for Historical Performance Practice, 1992), 150.
[196] Christoph Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000).

type."[197] Also, David Schulenberg writes in 2006 that the seven keyboard toccatas are "strong works, each with a distinctive design."[198] Despite these more positive reviews the main impact this change of view has brought is a burst in the number of recordings specifically on the harpsichord. Since the year 2000, at least ten recordings of the complete seven toccatas have been released. These recordings are made by some of the most respected harpsichordists of our age including Peter Watchorn (2000), Bob van Asperen (2002), Ursula Dütschler (2002), Pierre Hantaï (2000 and 2011), Blandine Rannou (2005), Menno van Delft (2010), and Léon Berben (2010).

In comparison, only a handful of recordings have been made of the complete seven toccatas on the piano since the turn of the century. Angela Hewitt's recording of the seven toccatas on piano in 2002 is the only one by a well-known artist in the current century. This may change in the near future, however, since there appears to be a recent trend—at the time of writing this treatise—favoring these works on the piano. In 2010 Andrea Bacchetti recorded the complete seven toccatas and in September of 2012 Stepan Simonian, the 2010 second prizewinner of the Leipzig Bach competition, released a recording of all seven of the toccatas. Also interesting to note is the fact that Glenn Gould's recording of the complete toccatas, originally recorded in 1979 and 1980, was re-released in 2012. There may indeed be a resurgence of popularity of these works beginning to emerge just over a decade into the twenty-first century.

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[197] Martin Geck, *Johann Sebastian Bach: Life and Work,* Trans. John Hargraves (Orlando, Florida: Harcourt, Inc., 2000), 489.
[198] David Schulenberg, *The Keyboard Music of J. S. Bach,* 2d ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006) 98.

However, the question of why there are so many more recordings of these works on the harpsichord than on the piano has yet to be answered. This dearth of recordings on the piano may be related to the seventeenth-century *stylus phantasticus* in which the seven keyboard toccatas were composed. Indeed, keyboard works of the seventeenth century, such as those of Froberger, are certainly not a part of the pianist's mainstream oeuvre either.

Since the performance of Bach's toccatas on the piano seems to be a relatively recent development, it will serve the musician of today well to know what are the current viewpoints regarding the performance of Bach on the piano. Also discussed below will be some details on how to transfer Bach's harpsichord-friendly idioms to the piano.

Validity of Bach's Keyboard Toccatas on Piano

The reluctance of pianists to record these works leads to the question that perhaps it is not recommended to perform these works on the piano. This view, however, is easily contradicted by the fact that many pianists, both past and present, have recorded Bach's Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue, BWV 903. This work, although not explored under the present discussion, confronts the performer with the same idiomatic difficulties that the seven keyboard toccatas present, including the use of the *stylus phantasticus* idiom. Thus, while the seventeenth-century idiom can be challenging to interpret on the piano, it should not prohibit today's pianists from playing them on the modern instrument.

On the topic of whether or not one should play Bach on the piano, Ferguson states that Bach's music should ideally be performed on the instrument for which it was

composed, but that not everyone owns a clavichord or a harpsichord. Ferguson concludes that it is perfectly permissible to perform Bach on the piano, saying: "It is undoubtedly better to do that than not to play the music at all."[199]

Current performers of Bach on piano also have a number of highly important ideas to add to the discussion of whether or not to play Bach on the piano. András Schiff, after explaining the emphasis that Bach places on playing cantabile (as Bach states in the preface to the Inventions), says: "I think most of Bach's keyboard music is inspired by the clavichord, or specifically written for it. […] The important point here is that there is probably no other instrument that is as 'non-cantabile' as the harpsichord."[200] Indeed, due to the availability of dynamics through varying the speed of attack on the key, the piano has more in common with the clavichord than with the harpsichord (despite the great disparity in volume between these two instruments). However, if one has a very high-quality harpsichord the tone can be in fact very singing. Despite this fact, the point that Schiff makes is a credible one; by demonstrating Bach's preference for *cantabile* playing and therefore the clavichord, Schiff has made the case for performing Bach on the piano due to its superior *cantabile* capabilities.

Murray Perahia, also has some important points to make on the performance of Bach's music on the piano. His viewpoint is more inclusive than Schiff's. Perahia explains that he owns a harpsichord and works on his pieces at this instrument in order to understand its unique expressive palette. He explains that the knowledge of how to

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[199] Howard Ferguson, Keyboard Interpretation from the 14th to the 19th Century: An Introduction (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 153.
[200] Jeremy Siepmann, "Bach on the Piano," *International Piano*, January/February 2011, 54.

express at the harpsichord is helpful to the modern pianist because the player will learn not to believe the stereotypes about this instrument that are often assumed by pianists (e.g. one should always play Bach on the piano with a non-legato touch). Beyond using the harpsichord to inform his performances, Perahia advocates performing Bach on the modern piano because of his view that Bach's music has a long line which is most successfully brought out on the modern instrument: "Bach is made up of small phrases, but they shouldn't get the better of the bigger line, and there is a bigger line in Bach. To see only the small phrases is very destructive. I think the piano is the best instrument for conveying this bigger line, but that's perhaps because it's my instrument."[201]

Yet another twenty-first-century perspective is the one of the Bach pianist, Angela Hewitt. She takes a very direct approach to the question of whether or not to play Bach on the piano when she says: "My own view has always been, since I was a child, that there is absolutely nothing wrong with playing Bach on the piano, nothing at all."[202] Hewitt goes on to say practically what Schiff and Perahia implied by their discussions of the *cantabile* capabilities of the piano and also the ability of the piano to create a long line:

> The piano can do so much more with this music than a harpsichord can. That's why the piano developed; people got a bit tired of a keyboard instrument that couldn't imitate the human voice. It couldn't taper the phrases; it couldn't distinguish between two voices played with the same hand, I think adding the extra dimensions that the piano gives to Bach's music is really wonderful.[203]

Hewitt's viewpoint, though quite old-fashioned due to the idea that the

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[201] Siepmann, "Bach on the Piano," 54.
[202] Maggie Williams, "A Date with the '48'," *International Piano,* November/December, 2007: 16.
[203] Williams, "A Date," 16.

harpsichord is inferior, is in support of the piano for Bach performance.

Transferring Bach to the Piano

Although it is evident from the discussions above that these Bach performers agree that there is certainly nothing wrong with playing Bach on the piano, the matter does not simply end there. Since musicians of today are equipped with a broad wealth of scholarship on the matter of historically informed performance, it would be ludicrous not to use this information to our advantage. As Richard Troeger says: "The essential point was and remains that the music must be played with knowledge of the musical style as well as of the original instruments." [204] Troeger's inclusion of "original instruments" in this remark is an interesting one; he seems to be advocating that the performer should at least become acquainted with historical instruments in order to inform their performances on our modern instruments. Troeger also remarks: "Today's piano usually makes its best effects in Bach's music when played on its own terms, with its own resources, *but informed by what Bach's own world of instruments* (non-keyboard as well as keyboard) has to tell us."[205]

Thus, perhaps the best way to gain a historical understanding is to experience playing historical instruments or reproductions first-hand. The touch of the keyboard, the way the instrument articulates, and the timbre of the instrument (if the instrument is restored or built properly) will give more information to the performer than will volumes

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[204] Richard Troeger, *Playing Bach on the Keyboard: A Practical Guide* (Cambridge, England: Amadeus Press, 2003), 21.
[205] Troeger, *Playing Bach*, 38 (emphasis added).

of reading. Even if the performer does not intend to present works on the harpsichord, clavichord, or organ in public concerts the experience of playing these instruments will create a more informed performance at the piano.

Some of the greatest pianists of our time have done this very thing. Glenn Gould said that his experiences learning the organ had a profound influence on the way he plays Bach.[206] Murray Perahia, as was mentioned above, states that he owns a harpsichord and tries works on that instrument in order to understand its expressive effects.[207] Rosalyn Tureck and Claudio Arrau have also been known to use the harpsichord and clavichord to inspire their interpretations.[208] With the example of musicians such as these, it is impossible to downplay the significance of having at least a working knowledge of how the historical instruments are designed to express.

If we are to take the example of these great Bach pianists and use historical instruments to inform our performance at the modern piano, what will this show us? The results of this type of study are unquantifiable. However there are a few aspects that can be mentioned here. First, there are some features of historical instruments that should be emulated on the piano. These aspects include clarity of sound, varied articulation, sensitive use of dynamics, and finger legato. Study on historical instruments will also give the pianist better finger technique, a better sense of stylistic Baroque tempi, and an

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[206] "The organ was a great, great influence, not only on my later taste in repertoire, but I think also on the physical manner in which I tried to play the piano." Peter Ostwald, *Glenn Gould: The Ecstasy and Tragedy of Genius* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), 69.
[207] Siepmann, "Bach on the Piano," 54.
[208] Troeger, *Playing Bach*, 22.

enhanced perspective of how composers used texture to show the dynamic/expressive ranges in their works. [209]

The harpsichord's clarity of sound, caused by the lack of thick overtones, is one of the best features that a pianist can emulate when playing Bach on the piano. Due to this clarity of sound, the disparate lines of a contrapuntal work automatically present themselves audibly to the listener. A pianist may think otherwise, that the lines would become buried through the lack of dynamic variation on the harpsichord, yet this is not the case. Clarity of sound can be achieved on the piano through a minimal use of the pedal, a light, articulated touch, and tasteful use of dynamics.

Also important is the heightened sense of articulation that study on the harpsichord will impart to today's pianist. Because of the harpsichord's admittedly monotonous tone (due to the plucking action), it is absolutely essential to use varied articulation for expressive effect. Many of Bach's figurations in the toccatas are repetitive (especially in the fugues of these works) and will benefit from slight variations in articulation from time to time. This necessary feature on the harpsichord becomes an additional positive aspect when applied to the piano. Although the piano already has many other ways to vary the expression of a particular musical figure—such as touch and dynamics—the use of varied articulation will create a more idiomatically pleasing effect on the piano.

The question of how to apply dynamics to Bach's works—which rarely include any markings in the score—is also helped by the study of historical instruments. When

[209] Troeger, *Playing Bach*, 39.

studying performance on the harpsichord, the assumption that this instrument cannot make used of varied dynamics is soon dispelled. Through an expert application of articulation, timing, and touch the harpsichordist can indeed give the effect of dynamics on their instrument. The choice to slur two notes will highlight one note over the other, creating a dynamic effect. Waiting slightly too long before a beat will emphasize the notes on the following beat. Using a more direct, explosive touch, rather than stroking the key will create a strong dynamic effect on the harpsichord. Further dispelling of the idea that pianists should not use dynamics is the fact that Bach and other composers of his time were known to make extensive use of the clavichord. This, in combination with the fact that Bach composed for instrumental and vocal ensembles, shows that it would be unimaginable for Bach to not conceive of a keyboard work in terms of its dynamic expression as well.

With the capacity to play in a very wide range of dynamics, however, the pianist should be aware of what would push the boundaries stylistically. This brings us to the last positive aspect of the harpsichord that I would like to discuss: the awareness of texture that a study of this instrument brings. Without the availability of a true dynamic crescendo on the harpsichord, one soon learns to observe the relative thickness or thinness and the range of the melodic activity in order to inform touch and timing. When the texture is thick and the hands far apart, this indicates a louder dynamic level. When the hands are close together and the texture thin, the opposite is assumed. The harpsichordist will then take these clues and apply articulation, timing, and touch in order to create the impression of a dynamic. These clues are so important to the harpsichordist

because without the availability of instant dynamic change through varied key pressure, sensitivity to dynamic expression can sometimes be overlooked. This creates a need for the harpsichordist to become extremely observant of the musical texture. With this heightened observation that the harpsichordist develops, the application of dynamics to Bach on the piano becomes more purposeful.

Despite all the positive aspects that a study on the harpsichord could bring, there are a few features of the historical instruments that do not transfer over to the piano. These features include the effect of bebung (the vibrato effect possible on the clavichord), playing with a monotonous dynamic (in order to supposedly imitate the harpsichord), playing with a constant detached articulation, and the heavy use of ornamentation and arpeggiations. Also, just as one should not try to make the piano sound as if it were plucking like a harpsichord, one should not play with a very quiet dynamic to imitate the clavichord. There are also a few features that the piano has that should be used sparingly, such as the pedal, which the early instruments do not have.

The first element mentioned above—bebung—is the most obvious feature of a historical instrument (specifically the clavichord) that cannot transfer to the piano. This is simply due to the mechanical differences between the piano and the clavichord. The clavichord's simple, non-escapement action means that the performer may virtually have direct contact with the string, thus enabling the vibrato effect by a quick repetitive motion of the key while the tangent is in contact with the string. The piano's escapement action means that the hammer immediately returns to its resting position even if the keys remain depressed by the performer's fingers, eliminating any effect that a repetitive motion on

the key would give. Although it is interesting to note this difference, it is not a great drawback to performing on the piano because bebung is neither mentioned by Bach nor explicitly required in any of his works.

The use of a monotonous or very limited dynamic range—in order to imitate the harpsichord's more limited ability in this area—is a subject that was touched on earlier in this chapter but that should be elaborated upon. It has been explained that the harpsichord can indeed create the effect of dynamic differences and that the harpsichordist should be very sensitive to the dynamics implied within the musical texture. However, it should also be mentioned that the piano will sound limited if not played on its own terms, making use of its own resources, including highly varied dynamics.

Another common misconception about that harpsichord is that it only has one articulation: one that is quite detached. This assumption brings about the idea that the performer of Bach should play with a very non-legato touch on the piano. While the plucking action is indeed a major attribute of the harpsichord's unique sound, it does not eliminate the possibility of variety in articulation, including long legato phrases. The pianist should employ the full range of articulation possibilities allowed by the piano, yet within the style of the Baroque (one would never play Bach as one plays Chopin, for example).

Although dynamics and articulation should not be eliminated when transferring Bach to the piano, ornamentation and arpeggiations—which are used elaborately on the harpsichord—should also be approached with a more minimalist approach on the piano. The harpsichord's limited dynamic range and lack of overtones means that it needs more

rhythmic activity in climactic sections. Also, the addition of ornaments can highlight particular beats within the measure. The piano, with its thick overtones and wide dynamic range no longer needs this, and will sound unnatural if too much ornamentation is applied. Schiff says: "I now ornament less than I used to, precisely because, as you say, on the piano there are many other means of variation." Hewitt similarly states that: "…you don't need to arpeggiate so much on the piano, or to make up for the lack of sustaining power with elegant twiddles, the way you do on the harpsichord. In fact if you do that kind of thing too much on the piano it really gets very tiresome."[210] Beyond the over-done effect, too much ornamentation on the piano is simply not practical. Schulenberg writes that "ornaments that can be played crisply and with little effort on the harpsichord seem heavier and require stronger fingers on the piano."[211] This in combination with the reasons given by Bach pianists points to a more sparing use of ornamentation on the piano.

The question has also been raised that, since the harpsichord and clavichord do not have pedals, should they be used in playing Bach on the piano? Current scholarship is in support of using the pedals on the piano. Newman supports the use of the sostenuto pedal, citing the fact that the harpsichord has a very live acoustic (an echo effect can be heard immediately after every string is plucked).[212] However, since a very pedaled effect that one would hear in Chopin or Debussy is never stylistically appropriate in Bach, both

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[210] Siepmann, "Bach on the Piano," 56.
[211] Schulenberg, *Keyboard Music,* 16.
[212] Anthony Newmann, *Bach and the Baroque: A Performing Guide to Baroque Music with Special Emphasis on the Music of J. S. Bach* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1985), 200

Newmann and Troeger say that pedaling in Bach should be very shallow and used with discretion.[213] Schulenberg explains this well when he writes the following:

> The greatest problems for pianists playing Bach arise not from the instrument per se, but from habits carried over from other repertories—for example, the *horror vacui* inculcated in many players at an early age through the insistence on legato pedaling in nineteenth- and twentieth-century music. Such pedaling, and the concomitant disregard of slurs in eighteenth-century music—which imply some degree of non-legato after the slur and on unslurred notes—discourage the pianist from using the finely honed silences that are one of the modern harpsichordist's most valuable resources.[214]

Thus, although too much use of the pedal is not stylistically appropriate, a light use of the pedal is encouraged. Not only the sostenuto pedal is available for Bach pianists, but also the bass sustain pedal. Troeger advocates the use of this pedal in passages where organ-like pedal-points are employed.[215] This use of pedaling is a distinct advantage that the piano has over the historical instruments.

As suggested in the previous paragraph, the piano does have capabilities that the historical instruments do not have. When used with discretion, these capabilities will help, not hinder, the expressive effects in Bach's music. Some features that the piano has in advantage to the harpsichord are its bass sustain pedal (as mentioned above) and its ability to highlight individual contrapuntal lines through variable dynamics. On the subject of highlighting contrapuntal lines Newman states: "The effect of bringing out fugal entrances on a piano can be striking, and one would definitely use this strong

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[213] Newmann, *Bach and the Baroque,* 200, and Troeger, *Playing Bach,* 43.
[214] Schulenberg, *Keyboard Music,* 16.
[215] Troeger, *Playing Bach,* 43.

characteristic of the piano in the service of the contrapuntal quality of the music."[216] Schulenberg, however, adds a cautionary note when he says, "too much reliance on the unique resources of the piano to shape or 'bring out' certain aspects of the music—inner voices, for example—risks producing a mannered effect."[217]

Troeger summarizes a discussion of playing Bach on the piano with this statement:

> Perhaps the ideal for performing Bach on the piano is that the instrument be used on its own terms, played with as much clarity and variety of color as possible, scaling the dynamics according to the inherent flux of the musical textures, and basing the performance generally on all that can be gleaned from the idioms of the instruments and performance styles known to Bach.[218]

This is perhaps an idealized view (as Troeger indicates himself) on what performers are willing and able to do in order to present a convincing performance of Bach, but it is one that, if accomplished, will yield far more satisfactory results both for the performer and the audience.

Twenty-First-Century Recordings of the Toccatas, BWV 910-916

Mentioned at the beginning of this chapter was the fact that only a few recordings have been made of the complete seven toccatas on piano within the twenty-first century in comparison to the number of recordings that these works have garnered by harpsichordists in the current century. In order to gain a full understanding of the twenty-first-century reaction to these works, then, three complete recordings of the toccatas on

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[216] Newman, *Bach and the Baroque,* 202.
[217] Schulenberg, *Keyboard Music*, 17.
[218] Troeger, *Playing Bach*, 44.

harpsichord (Bob van Asperen, Ursula Dütschler, and Pierre Hantaï) and the three complete recordings on piano mentioned earlier (Angela Hewitt, Andrea Bacchetti, and Stepan Simonian) will be discussed here. These are some of the most readily available recordings of the complete seven toccatas of Bach. Although there is an intriguing recording of the toccatas on clavichord by Richard Troeger, the only historical instrument that will be examined in the scope of this discussion of recordings is the harpsichord.

Of the three recordings on harpsichord mentioned above, the one by Pierre Hantaï is the most dramatic in terms of this performer's use of freedom, improvisational aspects, and virtuosity.[219] Hantaï, who is a French harpsichordist and conductor (b. 1964), was a student of Arthur Haas and Gustav Leonhardt. As is typical with French harpsichordists, the dramatic scope of his playing is phenomenal. His playing includes a wide variety of articulation, creative arpeggiations on chords, beautiful ornamentation, and an imaginative use of registration (switching between the manuals of the harpsichord and coupling or uncoupling the manuals).

Hantaï's use of timing is certainly free, as Kircher or Mattheson would instruct for works written in the *stylus phantasticus*. In the opening, free sections of the toccatas Hantaï employs a great variety of pulse and often includes an extremely virtuosic interpretation of scalar patterns (which he performs as fast as possible) such as in measures seven and eight of the D major toccata, BWV 912. Hantaï also has a free treatment of pulse in the fugues. Although his tempo for fugues is far stricter than in the free sections, Hantaï applies a tasteful amount of freedom when the texture of the fugue

[219] Johann Sebastian Bach, *Harpsichord Works*, Pierre Hantaï, EMI Classics CD, 2004.

requires it, such as in episodes or improvisatory interruptions within the fugal structure (e.g. mm. 169-170 of the F-sharp minor toccata, BWV 910).

In the D minor toccata, BWV 913, Hantaï highlights the improvisatory aspect of this work by employing many tasteful arpeggiations and ornaments in measures 121-145. Also, even in the difficult final gigue-like fugue of the D major toccata, BWV 912, Hantaï adds spontaneous, virtuosic runs to the texture.

Hantaï's choice of mood for each section is also tasteful, as he allows the character of music to define his interpretational choices. The opening of the D major toccata, with its brilliant upward runs, is played quickly with an explosive touch and two or three manuals coupled together on the instrument. In contrast, Hantaï performs the melancholy f-sharp minor fugue which appears later in this same work (mm. 80-111) slowly, with an over-legato touch and on the upper eight-foot manual (which creates a more introverted timbre).

One aspect of Hantaï's playing that may not be appreciated by every listener is his frequent use of an abrupt stop to the note. While this technique gives much energy to the performance, when used as frequently as Hantaï does, it can become almost mannered. Perhaps in Hantaï's endeavor to create a highly virtuosic, energetic interpretation of these toccatas, as he has here, Hantaï over-compensates with this one aspect.

On almost the opposite spectrum of the interpretational choices is the recording of the complete seven toccatas by Ursula Dütschler.[220] A student of Kenneth Gilbert and

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[220] Johann Sebastian Bach, *The Toccatas, BWV 910-916*, Ursula Dütschler, harpsichord. Claves Records CD, 2001.

Malcolm Bilson, Dütschler hails from Switzerland. Her playing, though refined and tasteful, lacks the high degree of technical brilliance and virtuosity that Hantaï's possesses. This being said, her interpretation is not without imagination and a high level of aesthetic beauty. This is achieved through thoughtful use of timing in the free sections, subtle ornamentation and arpeggiations, and careful attention to the affect of each major section in the structure.

In the D minor toccata, BWV 913, Dütschler approaches the opening free section with a flexible yet carefully structured rubato. This creates a beautiful long line; however, it does not necessarily give the impression of improvisation. While using extreme variety of tempo may give too fragmented an approach, Dütschler's timing is almost too perfect for this style of music. The same criticism could be made of the middle improvisatory section of D major toccata, BWV 912, which Bach labels with the term *con discrezione* (m. 111). Although this more thoughtful approach to timing and phrasing is still quite beautiful, it is perhaps not in keeping with the improvisatory mindset of these sections.

Despite a less-improvisatory use of timing, Dütschler's performance of these works do contain improvisatory additions of pitches (much as Mattheson recommends). Dütschler includes additional pitches in the tremolos in the D major toccata (m. 8) and an imaginative improvised segue into the sequence section of the F-sharp minor toccata, BWV 910 (m. 108).

Dütschler also has a beautiful tone throughout all the toccatas, and an intuitive use of registration on the double-manual harpsichord that she uses for this recording. Her use of these features brings out the character of each section accurately. In the D major

toccata Dütschler switches quickly between the upper and lower manual during the recitative section (mm. 68-79) in order to create the effect of voice and accompaniment. In the minor f-sharp minor fugue that immediately follows this section (mm. 80-111) Dütschler employs only one manual in keeping with the somber mood of this fugue. For the final fugue of this D major toccata Dütschler uses a coupled manual in order to highlight the brilliant, gigue-like character of this fugue.

Over all, Dütschler's performance of Bach's seven keyboard toccatas has many attributes to admire even though they do not push the boundaries of expression nearly as far as Hantaï's interpretation. However, the lack of a thoroughly spontaneous, improvisatory character in performance is not fitting for these works.

Fitting in neatly between these two interpretations is the complete recording of the toccatas as performed by Bob van Asperen.[221] Born in 1947 in Amsterdam, Asperen is a performer on the organ, clavichord, and harpsichord in addition to his conducting activities. He was a student of Gustav Leonhardt and taught at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague before accepting a position in Amsterdam's Sweelinck conservatory where he currently teaches. His performance of the toccatas fits between the two performances just discussed due to his approach, which is neither as dramatic as Hantaï's nor as reflective as Dütschler's.

Asperen's treatment of freedom in the free sections of the toccatas varies according to the placement of the section. The opening free sections are treated with great

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[221] Johann Sebastian Bach*, Well-Tempered Clavier, Goldberg Variations, Toccatas*, Bob van Asperen, EMI Classics CD, 2002.

virtuosity and brilliance yet there is no pausing at appropriate moments where an improvising harpsichordist might take time to establish a new idea (e.g. the opening of the D major toccata). This gives an almost rushed feeling in these opening sections. Asperen compensates for this, however, in the free sections, which fall in the middle of the musical structure. In the D minor toccata, for example, Asperen creates a beautiful improvisatory effect in the sequential section (mm. 121-145) through a great deal of rhythmic freedom, imaginative ornamentation and arpeggiation. Also, in the D major toccata, a great deal of freedom is used in the final improvisatory section (mm. 111-126).

Within the fugues themselves Asperen makes very little use of rhythmic freedom. Even in episodes or free interludes within the fugal structure the pulse remains basically the same. One example is in the second fugue of the D major toccata where, in measures 100 and 102, the fugal material dissolves. Asperen keeps the pulse steady here as he does throughout the fugue.

Though Asperen's touch is not as explosive as Hantaï's, he does make use of this touch to some degree in the *Allegro* fugue of the D major toccata (mm. 11-67). His touch is also quite brilliant in the opening and first fugue of the C minor toccata, BWV 911. As in Hantaï's interpretation, this creates a great deal of energy and virtuosity—yet may become tiresome to the listener.

These three recordings of the toccatas on harpsichord, all released or re-released within the twenty-first century, show a great degree of variety in approach. Yet they all capture, at least in part, one of the most important aspects of performance in these *stylus phantasticus* works: the element of improvisation. This is achieved through a free

approach to pulse and rhythm particularly in the sections that exhibit a less regular structure. Two of these performers, Hantaï and Dütschler, even employ freedom within the fugues of these works. All three of these recordings are well worth listening to given the level of beauty and virtuosity displayed in these carefully worked out performances.

The three recordings on the piano that we will now turn to include two by the relatively young and lesser-known musicians, Andrea Bacchetti and Stepan Simonian. Bacchetti (b. 1977) is an Italian pianist known best for his interpretations of Luciano Berio and his specialization in the works of J. S. Bach. Simonian (b. 1981), a Russian-born German pianist, was the 2nd prizewinner of the 2010 Bach Festival competition. Angela Hewitt (b. 1958), the most well-known pianist of the three, is a Canadian-born pianist who specializes in the keyboard music of J. S. Bach. Over a span of eleven years Hewitt recorded the complete repertoire of J. S. Bach on the Hyperion label (finished in 2005). We will see, in a brief examination of these three artists' recordings of the complete seven toccatas, BWV 910-916, that their styles vary even more than that of the three harpsichordists just discussed.

Beginning chronologically, with Hewitt's recording, the general impressions one makes when listening to her interpretation is one of a very well though-out and planned expression. [222] Her use of timing, articulation, touch, and ornamentation never seems spontaneous; on the contrary it has a quality of purposefulness. Yet this feature of her playing does not completely serve the style of writing that is found in the toccatas of J. S. Bach: the *stylus phantasticus*. While Hewitt does indeed use a great deal of rhythmic

[222] Johann Sebastian Bach, *The Toccatas*, Angela Hewitt, Hyperion UK CD, 2002.

freedom, especially in the free opening sections and free intermediary sections of the toccatas,, this pulling and pushing of the tempo does not give the impression of improvisation because it does not sound as if it is inspired by the moment. Rather, Hewitt's freedom seems to come from extensive study and careful application.

A few examples of this are found in the opening of the F-sharp minor toccata, BWV 910, where Hewitt does indeed use time to set apart the end and the beginning of a new gesture, yet this time is applied in a predictable manner: slow at the beginning of the gesture, fast in the middle, and slow at the end. Also, in the first intermediary free section (mm. 68-79) of the D major toccata, BWV 912, the use of rhythmic freedom, though used generously, once again gives the impression of studied or planned expressive technique. This section—which imitates vocal recitative—has a motive that is repeated in the first three measures. The aspect of Hewitt's interpretation that gives the impression of planned expression is the fact that she uses the same amount of ritardando and the same dynamic scheme for each repetition even though the motive changes through harmonic and textural transformation. Perhaps more variety would improve the improvisational aspect that is lacking here.

Very admirable, however, is Hewitt's light, clear, and agile manner of playing which serves the many quick note values we find in Bach's toccatas. This quality also helps the listener to hear the interwoven lines of the counterpoint in the fugal sections of the toccatas. In the final, gigue-like fugue of the D major toccata (mm. 127-277) the thick texture never seems to be a problem for Hewitt; the subject is always heard, while each pulsating accompaniment figure remains clear and dance-like.

Thus Hewitt's interpretation, though perhaps not improvisational enough, is of high quality technically. It is simply the element of spontaneity that seems to be lacking in her thorough rendering of the seven toccatas.

Andrea Bacchetti's recording, if one can look past the unfortunate placement of the microphone too far away from the piano, is quite unique and thought provoking. [223] Bacchetti has a great sense of spontaneity in the free sections of these toccatas. In the first intermediary free section of the D major toccata (mm. 68-79) Bacchetti uses a great variety of timing, touch, dynamics, and articulation to give a more improvisatory interpretation than that found in Hewitt's recording. He also uses a great deal of ornamentation in these sections; in fact, in the slow chorale-like section of the F-sharp minor toccata (mm. 19-47) so much ornamentation is added that one almost loses track of the contrapuntal line.

Although Bacchetti may be better than Hewitt at giving the impression of improvisation, his interpretation of fugal sections is not as successful. His spontaneous quality, which serves him well in the free sections, unfortunately takes over in the fugues. This leads to a lack of variation in dynamics, articulation, and tone color. A heavy hand, and a hammering tone characterize his performances of many of the fast, brilliant fugues in the toccatas. In addition, Bacchetti seems to have some technical trouble, and he accentuates weak beats, especially in the two fugues of the F-sharp minor toccata, BWV 910.

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[223] Johann Sebastian Bach, *Complete Keyboard Toccatas*, Andrea Bacchetti, Dynamic CD, 2011.

If one can overlook the shortcomings found in Bacchetti's fugal interpretations, his recording of the toccatas do contain an admirable measure of spontaneity that leads to a thought-provoking and intriguing interpretation.

The final performer of our discussion, Stepan Simonian, also presents a thought-provoking interpretation of the seven toccatas, but on a much higher level than the two performers just reviewed. This recording, which was released in September of 2012, seems to be Simonian's only recording at the time of writing this treatise, but, judging from its high quality technically and artistically, it will probably not be his last. Simonian's interpretations of these works are stunningly beautiful and incredibly virtuosic. [224]

Due to a high degree of originality, his performance of these works may not be for every listener, but they accomplish what no recording before had accomplished; they are heavily inspired by the performance techniques of a harpsichordist, yet they manage to not sound mannered or simply imitative of this historical instrument.

The features of Simonian's playing that unite the sound of the harpsichord with the sound of the piano are his clarity of touch, freedom of timing, frequent but not overpowering ornamentation, imaginative use of arpeggiation, and his detailed attention to texture to inform touch and dynamic level. In the D major toccata, Simonian plays the scales and tremolos in measure seven and eight with speed and clarity, similarly to Hantaï's imaginative performance of the same toccata on the harpsichord. In the ensuing

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[224] Johann Sebastian Bach, *Toccatas for Piano: BWV 910-916*, Stepan Simonian, Genuin CD, 2012.

fugue Simonian's clarity of touch allows for the inclusion of expressive elements such as arpeggiations from the bass, ornamentation, varied articulation, and other features that are so idiomatic to this work. The intermediary free section that follows (mm. 68-79) is played by Simonian with so much variety in touch, articulation, and timing that it truly does sound improvised.

Simonian's interpretation of the following f-sharp minor fugue (mm. 80-111 of the D major toccata) is the most expressive of these three musicians' interpretations due to Simonian's attention to the texture and register of the melodic lines. Simonian highlights the architectural shapes of these lines through a varied use of touch, articulation, and timing. The *con discrezione* section is once again sensitively played. Spontaneity is so thoroughly a part of Simonian's playing, that one could certainly imagine the performer improvising this very free section of the D major toccata.

The final, gigue-like fugue of this toccata is played by Simonian with a great variety of articulation, a clear touch, and exuberant dance-like quality. Although the final virtuosic free section which ends this toccata is just slightly slower than the previous fugal material, it is to Simonian's credit that the right hand figuration is much more audible than it is in Hewitt's recording.

The other six toccatas on Simonian's recording, though not thoroughly explored here, are equally expressive, spontaneous, and virtuosic. His work is highly individualistic and seems to truly come from a heartfelt reaction to the expressive writing of J. S. Bach found in the seven keyboard toccatas. Whether he will be the next Murray Perahia, Rosalyn Tureck, or András Schiff, is hard to tell, yet one point is worth

mentioning: in this review of some of the twenty-first-century recordings of Bach's toccatas, the one that captures the essence of these works seems also to be the one that most thoroughly incorporates idiomatic features of the historical instruments for which the toccatas were composed. With the highly successful early music movement in Europe at the present time and the growing interest in historically informed performance in America as well, it may be that the sounds and techniques of historical instruments are beginning to reenter the consciousness of today's pianists.

Conclusion

This treatise has focused on how to present a performance of J. S. Bach's seven keyboard toccatas, BWV 910-916, that is both historically informed and emotionally persuasive. In this mission the inspiration behind these toccatas has been explored, and the interpretation, based on historical evidence, has been discussed. The result of this study has led to the discovery of a number of features of toccatas in general and of Bach's toccatas in particular.

On the topic of inspiration it has been discovered that the toccata may have developed from vocal transcriptions of Gregorian psalm tunes; toccatas were also used to set the pitch for the vocal work that would follow. The sectional feature of the toccata allowed the keyboardist to conclude whenever he chose to do so or when the pacing of the liturgy required it. This sectional feature remained even to the times of J. S. Bach; however, the practice of concluding the toccata before the end of the work most likely did not. The virtuosic nature of the toccata throughout history hearkens back to the compositional practice of improvisational elaboration on a simple bass line. Also, one of the most important topics that this research has uncovered is the fact that J. S. Bach's toccatas continue a dramatic, improvisatory compositional style from the seventeenth century called the *stylus phantasticus*. Thus the toccatas of Bach, although unique and inclusive of progressive musical material as well, continue to uphold traditions begun a century prior to their composition.

The discussion about inspiration naturally gives the impulse for an exploration of interpretation based on historically informed principles. In the discussion of this topic a number of intriguing concepts have been investigated. With the knowledge of the seventeenth-century *stylus phantasticus* tradition that J. S. Bach's toccatas stem from, the performer is able to make some important assumptions about how these works should be performed. The directives found in historical sources point to a very free performance of these works both rhythmically and in the addition of pitches (adding improvisational flourishes, ornaments, and arpeggiations to the score). The performer should assume the mindset of an improvising musician even in the fugal sections of these works to create a spontaneous quality. This was the focus of the discussion on interpretation; however, some other features of performance, such as transferring harpsichord idioms to the piano, were also explored.

As with any investigative research project, this study has raised just as many questions as it has answered. As shown in chapter two, there are several theories about how the toccata originated. Was the toccata an improvisation that was frozen into notation? Do toccatas have hidden *cantus firmus* bass lines taken from Gregorian chant? Are toccatas elaborations of madrigals? What does it truly mean to play without observation to the pitch or meter? These questions cannot be completely answered, but perhaps as more research is done in this area these aspects of the toccata will be more deeply understood.

In an exploration of the *stylus phantasticus* the definitions of Kircher and Mattheson gave rise to a very important question: does the term *stylus phantasticus*

include the contrapuntal sections in a toccata or does it only refer to the free, improvisatory interludes, instrumental recitatives, and lengthy sequences that are found between each contrapuntal section? Kircher seems to imply that counterpoint is a part of the *stylus phantasticus*, while Mattheson has a slightly differing view. Are Kircher and Mattheson only apparently disagreeing on this point due to the fact that these definitions were written in different centuries (the fugue having developed into a far more structured device at the time of Mattheson)? I have given a preference to the position that Kircher and Mattheson do not completely disagree, since both would have certainly allowed imitative material to be a part of this term—just "formal" fugues would not have been consistent with the free nature of the *stylus phantasticus*. Supporting this stance is the fact that the fugues found in Bach's toccatas are by nature more improvisatory than those found in his other works. However, there is certainly room for opposing views on this issue.

Even though there are many more questions to be answered, it is hoped that the present study has given the performer of J. S. Bach's seven keyboard toccatas, BWV 910-916, a comprehensive understanding of their background, stylistic, and interpretive challenges. With this information the performer is better equipped to find an interpretation that is both historically based and musically rewarding.

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